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STORIES OF SCIENCE AND FANTASY

DECEMBER, 1954

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**REVOLT
OF THE
OUTWORLDS**
BY MILTON LESSER



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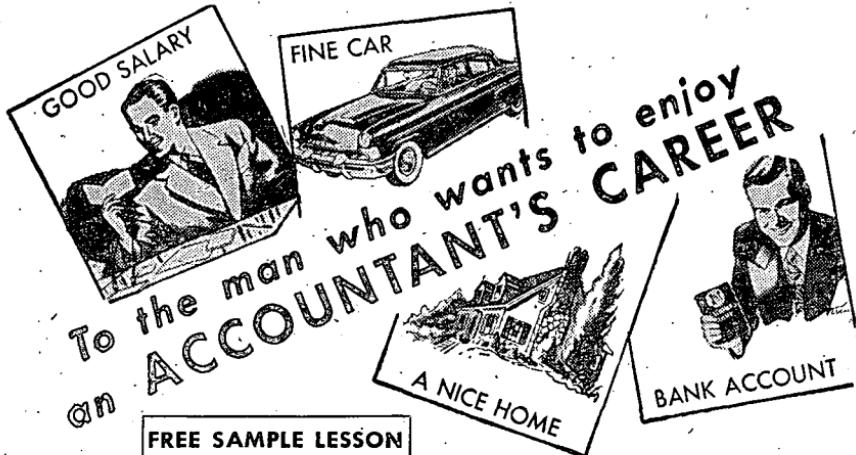
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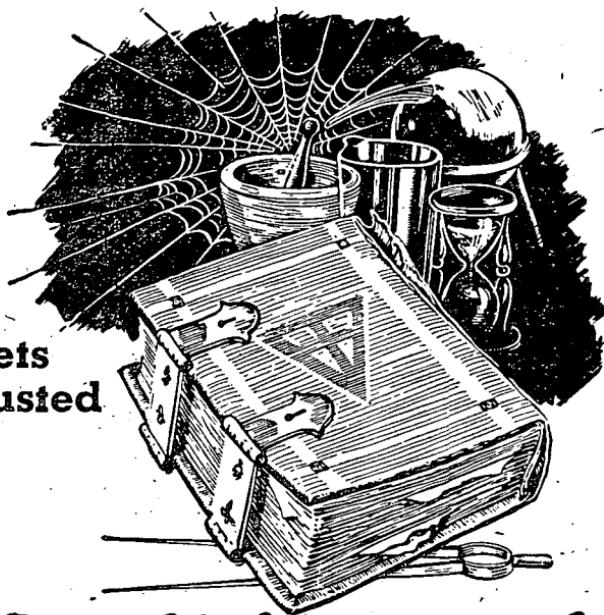
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The Editorial

WE'VE got news for you; you are nuts! At least that's what a psychiatric social worker named Robert Plank suggests in a medical journal, *International Record of Medicine and General Practice Clinics*. According to Plank, science fiction stories reflect "schizophrenic manifestations" of authors who find release in writing them, and readers, who appease their own psychic traumas by reading them. Plank observes profoundly that, "Episodes of space travel are by no means rare in the imaginings of the mentally ill."

NOW we don't pretend to be an expert on mental diseases, and undoubtedly are not, but we do know a little bit about science fiction and the people who make up the field. Few of the people we know (ourselves included) appear desperately in need of white coat attention. But then, apparently we schizos wouldn't know our problem anyway.

BIG point in Plank's prognosis as we see it is that anyone who dares to speculate on the future—and how it will affect men living then—has flipped his lid for sure. Somebody should have told Galileo this, and Da Vinci, not to mention Nostradamus (quite a science fiction writer!) and a few of

our 20th century boys like the Wright Brothers and the AEC teams who put a new interpretation on the mushroom. They were all obviously nuttier than the proverbial fruitcake. Perhaps Jules Verne was the craziest of all!

FOR ages intelligent men have predicted the future, and tried to improve it thereby. Science fiction is simply a doorway into that future, an advance glimpse of tomorrow. Science fictioneers look through that door with eyes extrapolating known facts. That's a facet of progress, and it's not caught with a butterfly net! . . . wh



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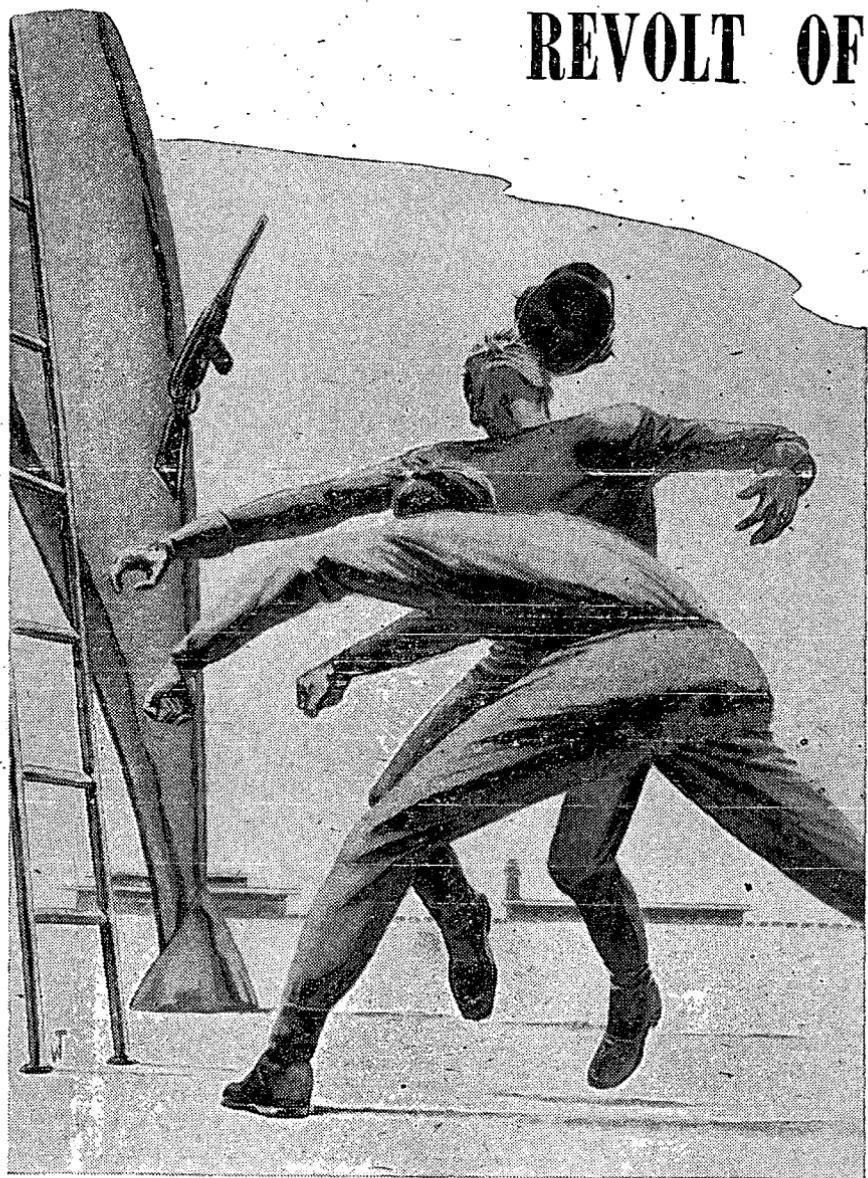
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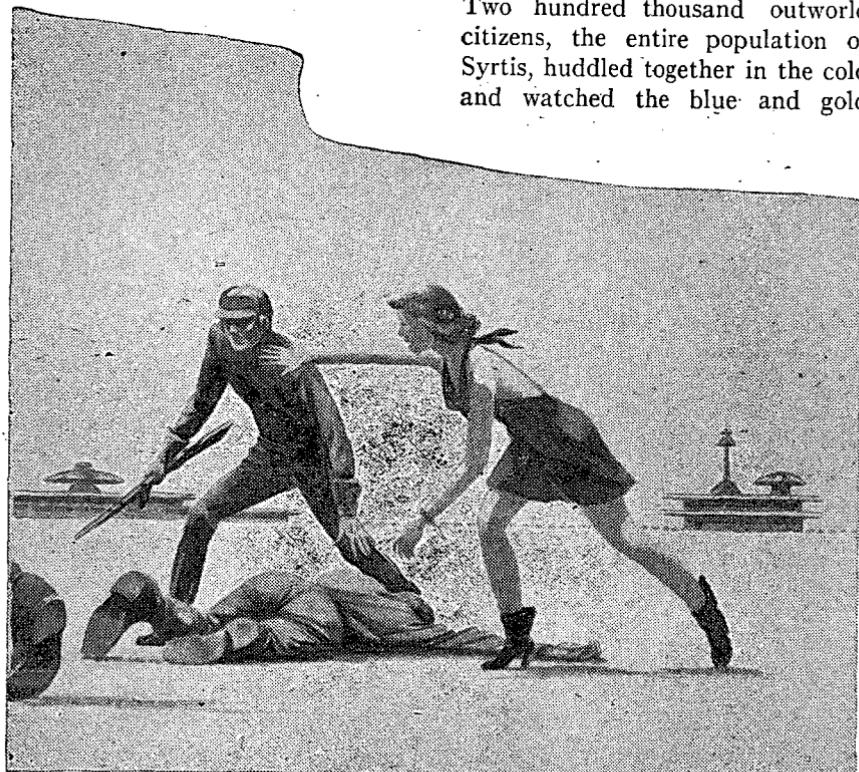


THE OUTWORLDS

by Milton Lesser

Alan Tremaine knew Mars received its water via the space warp from Venus. If this life-line were cut it meant war — and mankind's destruction!

AMPLIFIERS swelled the clarion call of the trumpet above the keening Martian wind which swept into the great central plaza of Syrtis Major City. Two hundred thousand outworld citizens, the entire population of Syrtis, huddled together in the cold and watched the blue and gold



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banner of the Outworld Federation run up the pole to flutter proudly beside the globe-and-stars flag of Earth.

There was a tremendous roar from the crowd as Alan Tremaine climbed the long flight of steps leading to the platform in the center of the plaza. *It's really my father they're applauding*, Alan Tremaine thought. The elder Tremaine, dead these two weeks, had made the dream of independence a reality for the Outworlds. Then, on the eve of success, he had been struck down by a still unknown assassin. Alan had been rushed from New Washington University on Earth by the Outworld Federation, to bring the magic name of Tremaine to the ceremony on Mars.

Above him now, Alan could see the military governor of Mars, Lieutenant General Roderick Olmstead, waiting alongside the banks of huge television screens which showed similar scenes on Venus, on Saturn's great moon Titan, on the four large Jovian satellites. But the eyes of all the Outworlds were here on Mars as Alan Tremaine mounted the platform to accept the Declaration of Sovereignty from the governor.

A hush descended on the crowd as General Olmstead unrolled the scroll and held it before the television cameras. "On behalf of the

government of Earth," he said, his voice booming across the Syrtis plaza on the amplifiers, "I present this Declaration of Sovereignty to the people of all the Outworlds. The five hundred million citizens of Mars, Venus, Titan and the Jovian Moons will hereafter march alongside the peoples of Earth in Equal Union."

Two hundred thousand voices rose in a thunderous peal of acclaim.

"It is to your everlasting credit," General Olmstead went on, "that your great struggle for freedom bears fruit today bloodlessly. History shall long remember this moment, for the grim alternative of war was always present but shunned by your very great leader, Richard Tremaine."

There was not a sound now in all the vast crowd. Alan Tremaine thought it must be the same elsewhere, with half a billion Outworld citizens watching on their television screens across the solar system.

"The one tragedy of your greatest moment," General Olmstead concluded, "is that Richard Tremaine did not live to see it become a reality. I now place this scroll in the hands of his only son, Alan Tremaine."

His eyes suddenly misty, Alan accepted the Declaration of Sovereignty.

REVOLT OF THE OUTWORLDS

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eighty from General Olmstead. The long political struggle, climaxed today on the windswept plaza of Syrtis Major City, was not his. Attending New Washington University on Earth, he had missed the dramatic sequence of events which led to this day. Almost, he felt like an outsider. But he believed in their fight even if he had had no active part in it. And the name Tremaine was now lifted into the pale sky above Syrtis Plaza on two hundred thousand voices.

"Tremaine! Tremaine! Speech! Speech!"

Alan took a deep breath and cleared his throat. Faces as numerous as the desert sands of Mars gazed up at him. Untold millions more watched their television screens on the other Outworlds. Seated beside her father, Laura Olmstead smiled at him.

"I humbly accept this Declaration of Sovereignty on behalf of all the Outworlds and on behalf of my father," Alan said. "I'm sure that on this day my father would offer thanks to God that our freedom was achieved without violence."

JUST then the television screens depicting smaller ceremonies on the other Outworlds erupted into violent activity. There was muted thunder from the Venus screen.

People could be seen running about wildly, the drone of jets was heard. Brilliant light flared, blanking the screen momentarily. When it could be seen again, a mushroom-topped atomic cloud was rising from the crater which had been the Governor's Headquarters on Venus. The scene was the same on Titan, and the four Jovian Moons.

A voice blared: "Attention! Attention Mars. This is Government Station, Ganymede. Seconds ago, the Outworld Federation met freedom with treachery. Even as tactical atomic weapons were used on the Government Headquarters, their speakers were proclaiming peaceful union. But now the masses have risen behind the spectre of military violence. 'Equal Union is not enough,' their leaders cry. 'We're ready to fight for total independence!' The traitorous Federation militia is marching on the underground Government Station here. Protect yourself, Mars!" Abruptly, the staccato blast of an automatic hand weapon could be heard. The voice from Ganymede was stilled.

General Olmstead rushed to the microphone, pushing Alan roughly aside. "All Martian units!" he cried: "Prepare for war. Directive A-2; this headquarters, put into immediate effect. Martial law is proclaimed. All civilian authority is

IMAGINATION

hereby terminated. Protect the spacefield and the government station. All commissioned leaders of the Outworld Federation on Mars will surrender themselves, weaponless, to the military authorities. Those who resist face immediate arrest." All at once, the microphone squawked into silence. Someone had cut off the generators below the platform.

"Tremaine," General Olmstead raged, "your father is better off dead. Seeing this happen would have killed him. Your name will go down in history, all right—as the worst traitor since Benedict Arnold."

Alan shook his head. It all had happened so fast, his senses were still numb with shock. The Federation had told him nothing about this. The Federation had been content with Equal Union, his father's dream. True, a militant minority group within the Federation had longed for total independence, through violence if necessary, but Richard Tremaine had always opposed this. Now, it had happened.

Military control of Venus, Titan and the Jovian moons was inadequate. In hours, the governments would fall. The same was true for the smaller centers of Martian population, but Earth maintained its strongest military garrison in Syrtis Major City. Here the Earth

forces, under General Olmstead, could probably hold their own.

But it was open revolt now, something which the dead Richard Tremaine had opposed as steadfastly as he had opposed Earth domination of the Outworlds.

"I didn't know," Alan began. "Nobody told me . . ."

His voice was drowned in a swirling sea of sound as Federation militiamen threw their wind cloaks and revealed the uniforms beneath them as they charged up the steps toward the platform. Government soldiers, storming up the other side, waited for them. As yet, not a weapon had been fired in Syrtis.

"Stop!" Alan cried, rushing to the edge of the platform. "Are you insane? We wanted Equal Union. We've been granted Equal Union. Put down your weapons and go home."

THE front rank of the militiamen, three abreast on the stairs, paused." This was a Tremaine talking. There was a difference between father and son, of course, but a Tremaine had made this day possible.

The leader of the militiamen, a bearded fellow in the uniform of a major, shook his head. "You don't know, Mr. Tremaine. You weren't here when your father spoke his last words. We're carrying out

the orders of Richard Tremaine!"

Two government soldiers who had mounted the other side of the platform came up behind Alan and pinned his arms to his sides. "Go ahead and fire," one of them said. "Kill Tremaine's son, why don't you?"

The front rank of militiamen was being pressed up the stairs from behind, but had returned their weapons to their sides. Alan struggled with the soldiers who held him. Below the platform, the vast crowd was seething restlessly, watching the drama unfold above them. The thin sprinkling of government soldiers in their midst could be swept under in seconds unless government station reinforcements were sent at once.

Alan thrust his elbow back, felt it jar against the ribs of one of the soldiers. The man gasped as the air was forced from his lungs. Still gasping, he was spun around by Alan and hurled down on the militiamen mounting the stairs at the head of the platform. Alan whirled, but the second soldier was on him, circling his neck with a powerful arm. They went down together, thrashing and rolling across the platform.

Something roared overhead. Alan was aware of General Olmstead, his daughter Laura huddled behind him, pointing up at the sky. Then

a shadow passed swiftly over the platform, came back—and hovered. The roar was replaced by a loud clattering. Still wrestling with the soldier, Alan could see a jet-copter, switching from jets to rotors, hanging half a dozen feet above the platform like an enormous black grasshopper.

More militiamen leaped from the copter to join those swarming up the stairs, their hand weapons spitting death at the first rank of government soldiers which had come up the other side of the platform. The revolution in Syrtis Major City was an actual fact now.

"Get down!" General Olmstead told his daughter. "Flatten yourself."

But the brief firing atop the platform had cleared it of government soldiers. Rope ladders were dropped from the jet-copter.

"Tremaine," someone called from above. "Climb up quickly."

To remain here in Syrtis Major City was madness. Alan could accomplish nothing in the chaos of revolt. Besides, the militiaman had said this was his father's final wish. Armed rebellion for total independence. He had to find out. He caught the swaying rope ladder in his hands and mounted it. At the same moment, General Olmstead and his daughter were forced up another rope ladder at atomic pis-

tol point.

Its passengers securely inside, the jet-copter rose a hundred feet above the platform on its flashing, clattering rotors. Then the jets were cut in and the craft streaked north from Syrtis Major City at supersonic speed.

CHAPTER II

“**L**IES,” General Olmstead said bitterly. “Don’t tell me anything. It’s all lies.”

“I swear I knew nothing about this,” Alan insisted.

“Do you realize what you’ve done? Thousands of innocent people must have died already in the atomic explosions on the Outworlds. Millions more will perish before this war comes to an end. For it’s war you’ve brought to the solar system, Alan Tremaine. Is that what your father would have wanted?”

“I brought nothing,” Alan said. “I don’t know what my father would have wanted.”

“I believe him, Dad,” Laura Olmstead said. Alan had met her for the first time two weeks ago on the spaceship from Earth. She was going to join her father on Mars for the Declaration of Sovereignty ceremony. Alan had struck up a quick friendship with her in his darkest moments—when the

death of his father had seemed so tragic, bringing Alan’s world tumbling down about him. Laura Olmstead’s understanding, her frank sympathy, then her cheerful talk and companionship as the two week space journey wore on, had done much to help Alan. They had parted at the Syrtis Major spaceport, to meet again three days later as revolution unexpectedly engulfed Mars and the other Outworlds.

“Alan Tremaine is a traitor to Earth and his own people as well,” General Olmstead told his daughter now. “I won’t hear anything more about it.”

Half a dozen militiamen sat about the cabin of the jet-copter with them. Up front, a pilot and a co-pilot were at the controls.

“Alan’s new on Mars, Dad. He’s been at school on Earth, remember that.”

The leader of the militiamen turned to Alan and said, “We’re approaching Red Sands now, sir. Do you wish to go right down or look over the fortifications from the air?”

“Red Sands?” Alan asked. “What’s that?”

“Operation Headquarters, sir. Your lieutenants are waiting for you to take charge of the revolution, sir.”

“So he’s new on Mars,” General Olmstead told his daughter. “So

he doesn't know a thing about this. He's running the whole show, Laura. He's got us for hostages, too, or didn't you realize it? Earth will think twice about attacking Federation Headquarters with us prisoner there."

Alan was going to tell General Olmstead and his daughter they wouldn't remain hostages long if he could help it, but the militiaman was waiting for his answer. He said, "Let's go right down. Who's in charge of the Headquarters, soldier?"

"Why, you are, sir."

"No. I mean right now."

"Bennett Keifer, sir. Your father's right-hand man."

"Let's go down and meet this Bennett Keifer," Alan said. And, to Laura: "Don't worry about anything, Laura. It's going to be all right."

But when he reached for her hand, she withdrew it and would not meet his eyes directly.

THREE was nothing but the ochre wastelands of Mars, the dunes marching, windswept, from horizon to horizon. Far away to the east, a thin green line knifed across the rusty sands where vegetation clung precariously to the banks of a Martian canal, nurtured by the waters it brought down from the melting polar cap.

The militiamen flanked them on either side as they walked across the desert, two uniformed figures remaining behind long enough to cover the jet-copter with an ochre-colored tarpaulin which would effectively camouflage it from the air. It was like something from the Arabian Nights, Alan thought as they approached a low, rocky escarpment thrusting up through the sand. The leader of the militiamen placed his hand against a polished spot on the surface of the rock, which pulsed with the contact as a hidden device checked the pattern and whorls of the militiaman's fingerprints. The effect was the same as the Open Sesame of the Arabian Nights, for a great slab-like section of the escarpment rolled ponderously aside, revealing a dark cavity.

"Red Sands," the militiaman said proudly, and led the way inside.

Alan was totally unprepared for what happened next. The door in the rock rolled shut behind them. Lights blazed inside the cavern, brighter than the pale Martian day. A throbbing, busy city was spread out before them below the surface of Mars.

Throng of men, women and children lined the short road to the city on both sides. A great cry went up from them as Alan, the militiamen, General Olmstead and

his daughter approached.

"Hail, Tremaine!" The cry echoed from the rock walls of the underground city. "Hail, Tremaine!" It rolled from the far throbbing reaches of the bustling city. "Tremaine, Tremaine, Tremaine!"

Not for me, Alan thought. For my father. What, actually did he know about all this? Perhaps a revolution directed from the secret base here at Red Sands *had* been his father's secret dream. The adulation with which the people of Red Sands greeted him filled him with a sense of pride. Not for his own accomplishments, but for his father's. Laura Olmstead was, quite suddenly and unexpectedly, part of a different world. Alan shrugged, deciding to suspend judgment until he met and talked with Bennett Keifer.

Now there were cries of: "He looks like his father!" "See, the same brow, the same bearing!" "The eyes are the same, I tell you. We have Richard Tremaine with us all over again!" And always, from all sides: "Hail, Tremaine!"

Alan caught Laura's gaze and tried to smile at her. She was on the verge of tears. "The sycophantic hypocrites," she said. "It's disgusting, carrying on like this while people are dying all over the solar system."

"It isn't for me," Alan told her desperately. "It's in memory of my father."

Laura's eyelids squeezed shut. Tears on her cheeks, she walked blindly ahead, supported by her father's arm. "I hate you, Alan Tremaine," she said.

"TREMAINE," Bennett Keifer said half an hour later, shaking his hand with vigorous enthusiasm. "You look so much like your dead father I could have picked you out of any crowd. Sit down, boy."

Alan shook his head. "Thanks, but I'll stand." General Olmstead and his daughter had been left off elsewhere while Alan had been ushered into the Administration Center of Red Sands, a great rectangular structure carved from the subterranean rock of Mars. Finally, he had stood face to face with Bennett Keifer. A big, handsome man in the uniform of a Federation colonel, Keifer had flashing eyes and a direct manner which Alan found disarming.

"I'm sure you have many questions," Keifer said.

"Just one. Did my father sanction this armed revolt?"

"What a strange question. Of course he did."

"Nobody told me before."

"We couldn't reveal it today;

Tremaine. Not even to you. We couldn't chance revealing it until our forces had moved on all the Outworlds."

"In his letters, my father always said the glorious thing about the Outworld Federation was how it had achieved its ends bloodlessly."

"Tremaine, I'm telling you. I was here. They brought your father here after he was shot. He died with me at his side. He died saying that the Earth government was trying to trick us. Equal Union was a farce, he said. Equal Union—with Earth bleeding the Outworlds dry of their resources! Don't you see, Tremaine? Earth needs our mineral wealth—heavy water from Venus, iron from Mars, lithium and cobalt from the Jovian moons and Titan. They'll bleed us dry and pay next to nothing for our mineral wealth. Since theirs is the only market, we have no choice. The only alternative was armed revolt for the full freedom Earth wouldn't grant us."

"But in Equal Union we had an equal, representative vote for the first time. This Earth granted us."

"Representative vote, Tremaine. There's the catch. There are ten people on Earth for every Outworlder. What kind of equality is that?"

"I don't know," Alan admitted.

I think my father would have—"

"I'm telling you what your father said. I was there. Why don't you do this, Tremaine: get acquainted with our city. I don't want to rush you. When you're ready to take over and make the decisions, I'll step aside. How does that sound?"

"I don't want to usurp your authority just because my name's Tremaine," Alan said. "I don't understand this, not yet. I'm going to try, though." He was suddenly weary. It was the same feeling he had when news of his father's death had reached him on Earth. The world tumbling down about his shoulders. Atlas trying to hold up the globe but shorn of all his strength.

He said, "Is there someplace I can go to clean up? My head feels like it's spinning."

"Someplace to go," Keifer repeated the words, smiling. "Your father's apartment here in Red Sands is yours. I'll have one of our enlisted men show you the way. And take your time about things, Tremaine. No one is rushing you."

Alan thanked him and said, "What about General Olmstead and his daughter?"

"Don't you worry. Naturally, they're prisoners of war. But they'll be well-cared-for here. We're civilized people, Tremaine."

THEY shook hands again, then Alan followed a militiaman outside through the corridors of Red Sands to a large apartment quarried in the rock wall of the underground city. He dismissed the enlisted man and found a bent, elderly figure waiting for him inside.

The man had gray hair and thin, stooped shoulders—as if he had spent the better part of his life pouring over books. He spoke in a thin, reedy voice, choked with emotion. “Is any one waiting for you outside?” he inquired.

Alan shook his head.

“Then listen to me. I shouldn’t be here. If Keifer knew—” the elderly man shrugged “—I don’t know what might happen. Alan, I am Eugene Talbrick. Does the name mean anything to you?”

“Yes,” Alan nodded. “My father wrote about you often. He said you were always a pillar of strength to him, a . . .”

“No matter,” said Talbrick. “You have heard of me. Alan, the good name of Tremaine is being used to bathe the solar system in blood!”

“What are you talking about?”

“Keifer. He *says* your father secretly wanted armed revolt. It’s not true, Alan. And do you realize what Keifer plans to make of you?”

Alan frowned. Eugene Talbrick,

his father had always written, was an inspirational figure behind everything the Outworld Federation stood for. If Richard Tremaine had been the eloquent spokesman for freedom, Talbrick was the thinker. If Tremaine could be compared to Washington historically, then surely Talbrick could be compared to an older Thomas Jefferson, or Ben Franklin perhaps. “No,” Alan said. “I’ve only just met Keifer.”

“You’ll be a figurehead, Alan. Listen.”

Talbrick walked to a television screen on the wall and soon had it working. A grave-faced news commentator was saying, “. . . riots all over Syrtis Major City. The magic name of Tremaine is on everyone’s lips, Richard the father, Alan the son. If Richard Tremaine had not sanctioned this revolution, the people *say*, their forces never would have struck all over the solar system. If Alan Tremaine was not here to lead them, they might have accepted the Declaration of Sovereignty. But with the memory of one Tremaine and the leadership of another, they will fight now for total freedom.

“Elsewhere on the revolution front, search jets are sweeping wide over the Martian desert for some trace of Governor General Olmstead, who was kidnapped by

Federation forces along with his daughter. Up to this moment, no trace of them has been found . . .

"Here's a bulletin from Earth. Government warships have been dispatched to Venus, Titan and the Jovian Moons to put down the provisional Federation governments which have risen there. Heavy casualties on both sides are feared."

Talbrick blanked the television screen. "Believe me, Alan," he said. "Civilization may depend on your decision. Your father never sanctioned this armed uprising. Keifer lied. Keifer dreams of an independent Federation which can drive Earth to its knees economically. Or worse. You're to be in command, but he'll pull the strings behind you."

Alan paced back and forth without speaking. He hardly could believe Talbrick any more than he could believe Keifer. The one had been behind his father, offering strength from deep, philosophical wisdom. The other had been beside Richard Tremaine in all his stormy political fights.

Alan smiled without humor. "Charge and counter charge," he said. "My ears will probably be ringing with them. Do you have any proof?"

"Yes," said Eugene Talbrick. "A letter from your father to you. It's in my own quarters now. I

wouldn't mail it for fear it would be intercepted on its way to Earth."

"A letter?"

"He knew it was the end. He knew he was dying. He wrote the letter and gave it to me because he had seen through Keifer too late. Will you come with me now?"

"Of course," Alan said, and followed the old man from his father's apartment.

"HERE we are," Eugene Talbrick told him a few minutes later. He opened the door to his own quarters and stepped inside. Alan followed him into darkness, heard the old man groping ahead of him for the switch which would fill the windowless, rock-hewn apartment with light.

The door clicked shut behind them.

"That's funny," Talbrick's reedy voice was close at hand. "The light doesn't work."

There was a soft series of repeated thuds, someone moving across the carpet quickly.

"Who's there?" Eugene Talbrick called.

"Look out!" Alan cried, suddenly wary. He brushed past the old man and collided with someone there in the darkness. Briefly, they struggled, then something struck the side of Alan's head. He fell to his

knees, groping blindly ahead. His arms wrapped about a pair of legs, clung there grimly. Something lashed out at his chest, spilling him over on his back.

"Alan, where are you?" Eugene Talbrick said. "What's the matter?" Then Eugene Talbrick screamed once and was still. A weight fell across Alan, pinning him to the floor. Half-conscious, he rolled the heavy thing off him and scrambled unsteadily to his hands and knees. The door opened and closed swiftly, light from the corridor streaming in, then fading. Alan staggered to the door, opened it.

Outside in the corridor, there was no one.

Inside, the slender form of Eugene Talbrick was stretched out on its back. A red pool of blood was spreading on the carpet under him. Alan knew he was dead without feeling for the pulse.

A knife had been plunged into Eugene Talbrick's side, immediately below the heart.

CHAPTER III

"**N**ow, just a minute, Alan," Bennett Keifer said later. "Before you go off half-cocked like that—"

"Eugene made some accusations, then died," Alan insisted, "before

he could show me the proof."

"We're all grownups here, Alan," Keifer said easily. There was no mistaking his tone. He would *assume* Alan was a grownup. "You're twenty-five," he went on. "One day soon you'll take over the Federation movement, so you can't afford to be impetuous. You tried to find that letter, didn't you?"

"Yes," Alan admitted. "It wasn't there."

"Of course it wasn't. It never existed. Alan, listen to me. Talbrick was an old man. Our viewpoints differed diametrically. He couldn't reconcile himself with the fact that your father agreed with me."

"But—"

"But that isn't important. This is. Someone, some unknown person, killed your father. Someone killed Talbrick. Richard Tremaine, then Talbrick. I'm next in line, Alan. Or maybe you are. Someone is out to wreck the Federation from the inside, by killing off its leaders."

"If what you say is true, why didn't they finish the job in Talbrick's apartment? They could have killed me, too."

"You frightened them off."

"I'll be frank," Alan said coolly. "Let's assume *you* were responsible. You couldn't afford to kill me. You need me for a fig-

urehead."

Keifer smiled. "I should be angry. I'm not." He flipped the intercom toggle on his desk and said, "Haddix, come in here, please."

The door opened. A tall, gangling man in the uniform of a Federation captain entered the room. He moved with easy, feline grace. When he spoke, he purred like a great cat. "Yes, sir?" he said saluting Keifer. "You sent for me?"

"Alan, this is Captain Haddix, the Internal Security Officer here at Red Sands. Captain, will you tell Mr. Tremaine where I was for the past three hours?"

"Right here, sir. You had a brief interview with this man, then remained here with me, discussing the water ultimatum."

"You see?" Keifer said. "Right here."

Perhaps he had jumped to an unwarranted conclusion, Alan thought. He said, "What is this water ultimatum?"

Keifer dismissed the Internal Security Officer, then explained, "We're in trouble, Alan. An hour ago, the Earth colonial office contacted us with an ultimatum. Either we lay down our arms and tell the provisional governments on the other Outworlds to surrender their authority, or Mars' water supply is cut off. We were given one

hour."

"But Earth's own military forces here on Mars would die of thirst."

Keifer shrugged. "Apparently they're expendable. Of course, I rejected the ultimatum."

"What can you do?"

"I don't know," Keifer said. "They can do what they say, unfortunately."

It would be simple, Alan knew. Arid Mars had depended for water which flowed in an adequate trickle from the polar caps until the coming of the Earth colony. For the past twenty years, though, water-surplus Venus supplied Mars with its water. A warp had been opened in space from the Venusian orbit to the Martian, with life-giving water flowing through from the second planet to the fourth at the rate of fifty thousand gallons per second. It had been a stupendous sub-space engineering feat, for the warp varied in length from sixty to two hundred million miles, depending upon the orbital positions of the two planets. Earth could shut the warp at any point along its vast length. Patched, arid Mars would be forced to lay down its arms in a matter of days.

"Captain Haddix is taking a ship along the warp-route," Keifer said, "assuming the ultimatum is in earnest. He might be able to find the break, but I doubt if he could

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repair it. Would you care to go along?"

"Yes," Alan said. He still didn't believe Earth would subject millions of people, its own military garrison included, to killing thirst.

"Very well. I—"

At that moment, a buzzer sounded on Keifer's desk. "Yes, what is it?"

The voice was frantic. "This is the reservoir, sir. The water's stopped flowing. The warp is closed!"

"We'll ration what we have left," Keifer said grimly. "Two quarts per person, effective immediately." Then, to Alan: "I'll make arrangements for you with Captain Haddix. They weren't fooling, Alan. They gave us exactly one hour."

Alan met Captain Haddix outside, where plans were made for their flight to the spacewarp route. If Earth did this, Alan thought bleakly, then maybe Keifer was right. For Earth would thereby condemn itself in the eyes of the Outworlds with such blatant disregard for human life.

"THEY haven't touched us so far, Dad," Laura Olmstead told her father. "Alan won't let them."

"We're prisoners in this room. But I think Alan's a prisoner, too. Up here." General Olmstead tapped his head. "They've got the boy

fooled, Laura, if what you told me is the truth."

"I'm sure it is. I'm sure Alan wouldn't have betrayed his own father like that. You've got to trust him, Dad."

General Olmstead grunted. "We don't have any choice, do we?"

Laura was thinking: *Please, Alan. Please. They've got you confused. You didn't do this intentionally. Please.*

The door to their prison chamber suddenly slid, with much grating and creaking, into the wall. A tall, distinguished-looking man in the uniform of a Federation colonel came into the room. "I am Colonel Bennett Keifer," he introduced himself, "second in command to Alan Tremaine here at Red Sands. How do you do, Mr. Olmstead?"

"General Olmstead," Laura's father said coldly.

"We recognize no Earth titles here in Red Sands, Mr. Olmstead. We recognize your importance, though."

"Exactly what does that mean?"

"There are certain things Alan Tremaine would like to find out. The strength of the Earth garrison at Syrtis Major, the number of jetcopers at your disposal, your plans for putting down the insurrections at the smaller Martian settlements."

"You'll get nothing from me," General Olmstead promised.

"Perhaps. Your daughter is a lovely woman, Mr. Olmstead. Quite lovely."

"If you as much as touch her, I'll kill you with my own hands!"

"Theatrics, Mr. Olmstead. You are in no position to do anything of the sort. You can save us both a lot of trouble if you answer my questions."

"Get out of here," General Olmstead said.

Shrugging, Keifer called over his shoulder: "Guard!"

Two strapping figures entered the chamber and waited for orders.

"Take Mr. Olmstead to another room, please. I wish you were more reasonable, Mr. Olmstead. We need that information badly."

STRUGGLING and cursing, General Olmstead was borne from the room. "Don't worry about me," Laura called after him. "We both have a duty to Earth."

"This is ironic," Keifer said after the door had closed. "I had planned it thoroughly. We have men here who are experts in an art which was old when civilization was young."

"Torture?" Laura said. "My father won't—"

"I said it's ironic. I never expected you, Laura. The General has

a daughter, a common, ordinary girl. He loves her. He sees things in her no one else does. But you—you are beautiful. Listen to me, Laura. Your father is an experienced professional soldier. We can use him here in Red Sands. If we make an alliance, the Federation could hold all of Mars in a week."

"What kind of alliance?"

"There are few women in Red Sands," said Keifer. "None of them as pretty as you. I'm restless, Laura. That kind of alliance." Quite objectively, he let his eyes study her slowly, starting at the top of her head and working down without passion, without hurry. When he finished, she was blushing. "Exactly that kind of an alliance," he said:

"You're crazy if you think I—"

"Your father expects the worst. He thinks we're going to hurt you. We're not. We're going to hurt him."

"Plans can change. Your father will be tortured, while you are sitting here with me. We can break a man, Laura, physically and mentally. We can make him talk. Or—you can save us the trouble."

"How?"

"By telling your father you believe this is the winning side. By telling him you're going to live with me."

"To—what?"

"To live with me."

"I wouldn't marry you if—"

"My dear young lady. I never said anything about marriage. Perhaps later, I don't know. I'm a cautious man. You're still an unknown quantity, you see."

"You can just get out of here."

"As you wish. But let me tell you something: here in Red Sands we're subtle when we have to be, crude when we must. Now, take your father. There are ways of hurting a man, of pulling out his fingernails slowly, of applying pressure to certain nerves at the base of the skull, of a slow, steady pounding of the soles of the feet, of breaking bones, starting with the toes and—"

"That's enough!" Laura cried. "Don't say any more."

Keifer shrugged. "Also as you wish. Your father will not be harmed, I promise you. Tonight, you may come to my quarters if you wish. If you don't my promise will no longer be valid. In a day or two, perhaps we can tell your father of our alliance. Will I see you tonight?"

"Yes," Laura said. "Just get out of here now."

"Tonight," Keifer told her, and left the room.

CHAPTER IV

"THIS is Colonel Keifer calling warp-ship seven. Come in please."

"Warp seven, sir?"

"Captain Haddix?"

"A moment, sir."

Keifer waited impatiently, then saw Haddix's gaunt face on the viewscreen. "Where are you now, Haddix?"

"Starting out along the warp-route, sir. Has there been a change in plans?"

"Yes. I want you to return tonight, Captain Haddix. Without Alan Tremaine."

"But I thought—"

"Don't. We still need Tremaine's name, but the boy is suspicious. No one has to know he has been killed. This is one case where we want the name but *not* the game. You understand."

"Yes, sir."

"One more thing, Captain. How would you like to attain your majority?"

"Yes, sir!" Haddix beamed.

"Good. Return tonight without Tremaine and you'll be promoted. Good luck, Captain."

* * *

Alan felt awkward in the cumbersome spacesuit, clomping along the hull of warp ship seven with Captain Haddix. Ahead of him,

Haddix looked like some grotesque monster in the shapeless, inflated suit. But Haddix had learned to slide his feet along in their magnet-shod boots and could move with comparative ease.

"There's the warp station," Haddix called over the suit intercom, pointing with one gauntletted hand toward a black globe which obscured the starlight overhead. From the globe, an incredibly straight black line darted out across the gulf of space like a bridge to infinity. From here it seemed only inches thick, but Alan knew it was actually fifty feet across.

"That's the warp," Haddix said. "It bends space as if space were a sheet of paper with Venus at one corner and Mars at another. You fold the sheet of paper across to place Venus and Mars in juxtaposition. In the same way, this warp folds space, aligning Venus and Mars in sub-space."

"Why can't men travel the same way?" Alan asked. "It's almost instantaneous, isn't it? It takes almost a month by spaceship from Mars to Venus."

Haddix's laughter purred over the intercom. "Uh-uh," he said. "The stresses in a space-warp are tremendous. Water has no shape to lose, so it doesn't matter. A man would be mangled. Well, are you ready, Mr. Tremaine?"

"I guess so."

"Fine. Just point yourself in the direction of the warp station, unmagnetize your boots and switch on your shoulder jets. Once you get the hang of it, it's a cinch. Here we go."

Ahead of him, Alan saw Haddix's form suddenly lift from the hull of the spaceship and rocket up toward the warp station. Alan followed him, feeling utterly no sensation of movement after the initial acceleration.

A FEATURELESS black globe several hundred yards in diameter, the warp station floated toward them. Following Haddix's lead, Alan alighted on his hands, cutting his shoulder jets and cartwheeling into an upright position. The warp-station, he knew, was merely a terminal point for the space-warp itself. Untended, it housed the tremendous atomic power plant which unfolded the water on the Martian end of the warp from sub-space to normal space.

"As you can see," Haddix said, "the station is working. But there's no water."

Alan could feel the pulsing of great machinery underfoot. But the black tube of sub-space, yawning awesomely half a hundred feet to his left, was empty.

"Want to take a look?" Haddix

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demanded.

Alan nodded through the glassite helmet of his space suit, then fell into dragging, magnetized step beside Haddix. Soon they approached the lip of the sub-space tube, where sub-space intersected normal space in a fifty foot wide channel.

"It doesn't look dangerous," Alan said.

"For water, it's not. The pressure would crush a man to jelly."

Alan peered over the edge. Below him perhaps a dozen feet, a white line had been painted. Over it in stark white letters was the word CAUTION. Beyond that point, apparently, the actual space-warp began. "Look out!" Alan shouted. "What are you trying to do?"

Haddix was leaning against him, their two bulky suits in sudden, dangerous contact. Alan could feel himself slipping over the edge. Yelling now, his own voice deafening him inside the glassite helmet, Alan groped with clumsy, gauntleted hands for Haddix. He clutched the shoulder of the man's spacesuit, then felt himself tumbling over the edge into the tube.

There was a jolting sensation above him. He was sliding down the inflated body of Haddix's spacesuit, sliding, sliding. He wrapped his arms about the legs of the suit and clung there. Below his

dangling feet was the white line and the word CAUTION painted there. Immediately below that, the space-warp itself.

"Let go of me! Haddix screamed. "You'll kill us both."

Alan looked up. Haddix was clinging to the lip of the tube with both hands. Suddenly, Haddix began rocking back and forth in an attempt to dislodge Alan.

"Don't try it," Alan said. "All I've got to do is yank at your legs a little harder and we'll both fall down there."

"I can't climb up with you hanging on like that. I—I can't hold on much longer. This warp-station's at Earth normal gravity, Tremaine. My hands are slipping!"

"Listen to me," Alan said. "We can still get out of this. I can climb up your back, then pull you up after me."

"How do I know you will?"

"You don't. If we just hang here, we're as good as dead." Alan could feel the strain in his arms as he clung to Haddix's suit. For Haddix, the strain was double. Haddix could not be expected to hang there more than a few moments.

"I'm coming up," Alan said. "Don't try anything foolish."

HANGING by one arm, Alan reached up with his other hand

and grasped the belt of Haddix's suit. Suspended there by both arms now, he reached up again for the flange of metal at the neck of Haddix's suit, where the glassite helmet fit. He got the gauntletted fingers of one hand around it, then almost lost his precarious grip. He swung sickeningly over the abyss for one harrowing moment, then held the flange with both hands. Taking a deep breath, he reached for the lip of the tube itself and soon clambered up and over. He lay there briefly, panting. He had never been nearer death in his life.

"Help!" Haddix gasped. "I can't hold on much longer."

Alan crouched there, looked over the edge. Haddix still clung with both hands.

"Why did you try to kill me?" Alan demanded. "Did you kill my father and Eugene Talbrick too?"

"It was Keifer!" Haddix cried. "Keifer thought you were suspicious. He was going to get you out of the way and keep using your name."

"Did he kill my father?"

"I don't know. Honest."

"And Talbrick?"

"One of my men did it. At Keifer's orders. Get me out of here, I'm begging you."

"O.K.," Alan said. He braced himself and hauled Haddix up out

of the tube, then turned and jettisoned back toward the waiting warp-ship. They entered the airlock together, waited for the green safety light which announced the return of normal pressure and air, then stripped off their deflated space-suits and glassite helmets.

Cat-quick, Haddix yanked an atomic pistol from his belt.

Instinctively, matching reflex for reflex, Alan slapped it from his hand. The weapon roared, blasting the air over Alan's head as he dove for Haddix. They went down together, rolling across the floor. Alan was aware of Haddix shouting for help, of the man's long fingers closing on his throat, of a knee driven painfully into his groin.

The inner lock door swung open. The warp-ship's pilot crashed through and scrambled on the floor after the atomic pistol. "Get out of the way, Captain," he said. "I've got him covered."

But Haddix was a growling, choking, feline animal now, trying to squeeze the life from Alan's throat. Desperately, Alan groped blindly with his fingers. His thumbs found Haddix's eyes, gouging. Haddix screamed and tumbled clear, clawing at his face.

Alan sucked air into his lungs and sprang to his feet as the atomic pistol was discharged. He felt a sudden, burning numbness in his left arm,

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then was grappling with the pilot chest to chest; the atomic pistol between them. When the weapon went off, Alan was flung across the airlock, slamming against the wall. The pilot went down to his knees slowly, disbelief on his face as he died trying to stuff entrails back into his belly.

Haddix and Alan went for the atomic pistol at the same time. The Security Officer got his fingers around it and turned, snarling, toward Alan.

"All right, you no good son—" he began.

Alan stepped on his wrist, pinning it on the floor with the weapon. He kicked Haddix in the face with his other foot and retrieved the atomic pistol as Haddix slumped forward.

"Now listen," Alan said, breathing in great sobs, "we're going forward. You'll call Keifer and tell him I'm dead. Try anything else and I'll kill you. Understand?"

Haddix understood.

Alan followed him, stuffing his numb left hand into a pocket of his blouse as a temporary sling. By the time they reached the control cabin, the left side of his blouse was soaked with blood.

"**G**OOD dinner, wasn't it?" Bennett Keifer asked Laura.

"Yes," she said.

"Did you like the wine?"

"Yes."

"I'm glad you decided to accept my invitation. Are you?"

"Yes."

"Is that all you have to say, yes?"

"What do you want me to say?"

"Come here, Laura."

Dad, she thought. It's for you. Alan, Alan, where are you? She walked to where Keifer was sitting.

"Sit down, Laura."

She sat.

"You still don't like me," he said, as if it were both regretted and unexpected. "But you're all alone now. I've given you the opportunity to start a new life here with me. Your father can't help you. And Alan Tremaine—"

"What about Alan?" Laura asked eagerly.

"I want ours to be a frank relationship. No lies. No deceipts. Alan Tremaine is dead."

"What — what did you say?" Laura cried.

"Tremaine is dead. I got word this afternoon. An accident at the warp-station."

"It isn't true," Laura whispered. "It can't be true. Please. Please..."

"Listen to me, Laura. I'm going to win. I can't be stopped now. I'm offering you half, a woman's share of empire. Not just the Out-

worlds. I believe I can force Earth itself to its knees."

Alan, Alan, forgive me. I said I hated you . . .

"It isn't madness, Laura. With Tremaine's name and my plans, the Outworlds will rally behind me. And after they hear how Earth has sundered the space-warp from Venus—"

"Earth wouldn't," Laura said mechanically.

"It's on every Martian's lips," Keifer said.

"Then you did it yourself."

"Laura, Laura. I said a woman's share of empire. Don't worry yourself over the details. Wealth and jewels and importance, that's a woman's share. It's yours if you want it."

"My father—"

"Is a prisoner. Will you come here now?"

Laura looked at him, at this man who would carve a solar empire for himself by twisting the legitimate motives of the Outworld people. *It's for Dad*, she thought. She tried to fill her mind with that and nothing else. For her father. Otherwise, he would be tortured. For her father. For her father . . .

But when Keifer smiled down on her, calmly sure of himself, she thought of other things, of Earth, which did not yet understand the full extent of Keifer's madness; of

Alan, who had been slain treacherously . . .

"That's for my father!" she cried, and slapped Keifer's face.

He caught her hands, pinning them at her side. "You little vixen," he said. The imprint of her fingers was on his cheek. There was quick hatred in his eyes, but lust as well. "Why don't you cry for help?" he taunted her. "My guards will hear you."

Laura freed one of her hands and slapped him again, then watched as rage swept the lust from his eyes. "I'll break you," he promised, biting off the words one at a time. "You'll come crawling." He forced her down slowly on the couch.

They both looked up as the door to the room slid noisily into the wall.

Alan stood there.

CHAPTER V

"**G**ET up," Alan said, jerking the atomic pistol from his belt.

"But Haddix said—"

"Your guards welcomed me, Keifer. You couldn't afford to tell anyone else I was dead. Laura, are you all right?"

"Yes, Alan. I thought you . . . he said . . ."

"We're getting out of here. Kei-

fer, call your guards. Tell them to bring General Olmstead here. If you try any tricks, I'll kill you." Alan's head was whirling. He'd lost too much blood, he thought vaguely. There were two Laura's and two Keifer's swimming before his eyes.

"You can't desert your own people," Keifer told him. You don't like my policies, but—"

"Shut up. You told Haddix to kill me. One of Haddix's men killed Eugene Talbrick, at your orders."

"I—"

Alan jammed the atomic pistol against Keifer's chest. "One question," he said. "I want the truth. Who cut off the space-warp?"

"Earth—"

"I'm going to Earth to find out. I just want to know where I stand, that's all."

Keifer shrugged. "We did it, Alan. The Federation."

"You mean *you* did it. But why?"

Keifer remained stonily silent.

Abruptly, Alan found himself down on one knee. It took an incredible effort of will to stand up again. He needed a blood transfusion and could sleep around the clock and still wake up exhausted. Laura ran to him and said, "You're badly hurt, Alan. You ought to have that treated."

He smiled bleakly. "Tell me how?" he said, and handed her the pistol. "If Keifer does anything except send for your father, use this." He staggered to the couch and sat there, letting his head slump forward and down almost to his knees to renew the flow of blood to his brain. Dimly, he was aware of Keifer crossing the room to a video screen and asking someone at the other end to bring General Olmstead—Keifer said *Mr. Olmstead*—to his quarters.

Then there was a roaring in Alan's ears, the distant, far off pounding of surf on a water world like Venus, not arid Mars. It came closer, it swept down upon Alan in a surging, foaming tide and engulfed him . . .

"**A**LAN! Alan! Dad is here." "Laura" He blinked his eyes. Groggy, he stood up. Laura was on one side of him, General Olmstead on the other, pointing the atomic pistol squarely at Bennett Keifer.

"Just how do you expect to get out of here?" Keifer demanded.

"That's easy," Alan said. "You are coming with us."

"To Earth? You'll never make me."

"Get this straight," Alan said. "I could walk clear across Red Sands without anyone trying. to

stop me. I'm Alan Tremaine, remember? But we're going to do it the hard way because I want to turn you over to the authorities on Earth. Let's go."

Outside in the corridor, a few guards were loitering. They came to attention and saluted smartly as Keifer and Alan Tremaine came into view with General Olmstead and his daughter. They never suspected that General Olmstead held a pistol, hidden by the folds of his tunic, at Keifer's back.

General Olmstead told Alan as they followed the narrow corridor to a larger one, "My place is with the defenders of Red Sands. I wouldn't feel right going to Earth with you."

"We're taking the warp-ship," Alan said. "It's not really built for interplanetary travel, but it will have to do. We could drop you at Syrtis. But sir, I'd rather take Laura with me. Let's get her safely out of this war."

"Wait a minute!" Laura cried. "If you think—"

"I do," her father said, "and so does Alan. You'll go to Earth with him. He needs someone along to help watch Keifer, anyhow."

"But Dad!"

"But nothing."

"Alan, I want to go with you, but—"

"You heard your father. But

nothing."

Fifteen minutes later, they were putting on insulined surface garments at the quartermaster supply depot near the great stone portal which separated Red Sands from the Martian desert.

The clerk said, "Going up to the warp-station?"

"No," Bennett Keifer told him.

"Yes," Alan said.

The clerk scratched his head, but saluted as they marched toward the stone portal. "Open it," Alan told him.

The portal slid away. The fierce Martian wind blasted them with swirling, choking sand. The intense cold cleared Alan's head. Five hundred yards across the ochre sand, they could see the black bulk of the warp ship. The portal groaned and scraped shut behind them. You could see nothing but a bare escarpment of Martian granite.

"Haddix is tied up in the ship," Alan shouted over the shrieking wind. "We'll put him outside, then blast off."

Now the warp ship loomed over them, balanced black and ugly on its tail. Alan worked the airlock mechanism with numb fingers. The lock swung in.

Haddix was there, all right. Haddix stood in the airlock with another uniformed figure on either

side of him.

Haddix was pointing an atomic pistol out at them.

"HE left me here," Haddix told Keifer. "I got loose and called for help. I figured he was planning to use the ship again or he would have taken me out with him. So we waited right here. Smart, huh?"

"That was ingenious, *Major Haddix*," Keifer agreed.

Haddix climbed out of the airlock and stood with them on the ochre sand. His two men emerged behind him with coils of rope. "Sit down," Haddix said. "A trick I learned on Venus. We'll tie them back to back."

Nodding, Keifer asked General Olmstead for his weapon.

Alan crouched, facing Haddix. Once they were tied, they were as good as dead. Rallying the Out-world people behind Alan's name, Keifer would certainly dominate the Federation planets and might even go further. Haddix stood there warily, feet planted wide apart, ready for anything. It hardly seemed a calculated risk Alan thought. It seemed like suicide.

But there was nothing else he could do.

He scooped up a handful of sand and flung it in Haddix's face, leap-

ing for the Security Officer with the same motion. Then several things happened at once. Laura screamed. Keifer was grappling with General Olmstead, fighting a grim tug of war with him for the pistol. Haddix's weapon blasted air just above Alan's face, the searing flash of energy momentarily blinding him. Alan hit Haddix low with his shoulder, striking the man's knees, he thought. Haddix tumbled over on top of him, flattening Alan against the sand.

Alan got two handfuls of sand, then drove his fists at Haddix's face and opened them, rubbing the sand into his eyes. Haddix screamed like an animal in sudden, unexpected pain. There was a sudden wet warmth on Alan's left arm as the wound opened and began bleeding again, but Haddix had fallen away from him and Alan's energy-blinded eyes were beginning to make out shapes again.

He found Haddix's weapon in his hand as the two soldiers charged down upon him. He fired once and blasted a hole in the first one's chest. Haddix was scrambling over the sand toward him, groping blindly, cursing. The second soldier swung his coil of rope like a flail, whipping it down across Alan's face. He felt blood flowing in a quick torrent from his nose. He held the atomic pistol in both

hands as the soldier lifted the rope overhead again. The second blast of energy from Alan's weapon decapitated the soldier. The head tumbled away. The body took two steps toward Alan as if it could not believe this had happened, then pitched forward on the sand, staining the ochre with a deeper red.

Alan gagged but did not have time to be sick. He stood up and saw Haddix fleeing toward the escarpment which hid Red Sands. He fired once; but the range was too great, the wind too strong. Keifer and Laura were fighting for the second atomic pistol; Laura kicking him, raking his face with her fingernails and keeping him away from General Olmstead, who lay motionless on the sand. Keifer struck her brutally across the jaw with his fist, then turned, fired once in Alan's direction without aiming, and sprinted toward the escarpment.

Laura was unconscious. General Olmstead was unconscious or dead. Alan's limbs were like water. He knew Keifer would bring help. He had perhaps three minutes.

Somehow, he managed to drag Laura and her father inside the warp ship. He slammed the outer airlock door, closed the inner door, staggered to the controls. Figures, tiny black dots against the barren

ochre wilderness, were running toward the ship when Alan took it up into space under five G's acceleration.

Everything was going to be all right, he thought, and fainted.

SOMETHING cool was stroking his forehead, bathing the caked blood from his face. He was aware that his tunic and blouse had been removed, aware of a clean white bandage on his arm. Laura's face swam in and out of focus before him.

"Where are we?" he asked. Laura did not answer.

He looked at the controls. Seventy five thousand miles out from Mars, heading toward Earth. Present speed, thirty eight miles per second, still increasing. He could feel the gentle acceleration pressure, probably one and a half G's, tugging at him.

"Are we being followed?" he asked Laura.

"No. I don't know. Please. Please!"

"What's the matter?"

"Dad. He's—dead. Alan, Keifer killed him." Laura was crying silently, her shoulder shaking with sobs, her eyelids closed tightly, the tears streaming from them down her cheeks: "He's—dead . . ."

Alan stood up and walked to where he had dragged General Olm-

stead's inert form. A hole in the General's tunic revealed the wound. There was no pulse beat in his wrist.

First my father, Alan thought. First Richard Tremaine. Now General Olmstead. They were on opposite sides, the one championing freedom for the Outworlds; the other opposing it. But there had been nothing violent about their disagreement. It had been a political battle, waged in the arena of politics. And when Richard Tremaine had been granted Equal Union for his people, General Olmstead had bowed graciously to Earth's decision. Under other circumstances, they could have been friends, Alan's dead father and Laura's.

Now they were dead.

Both struck down by Bennett Keifer.

Alan wondered if it were always that way. The bad people rising to the top, like scum on water, employing treachery and violence to achieve their ends.

"It will be more than a vendetta," he said out loud.

"What did you say?"

"I'm going to get Keifer. My whole life will stand still until I can get him. Not because he killed them; not entirely for that. Because of who he is and what he stands for and how he'll use treach-

ery and violence like this for his own ends. Because Equal Union and parliamentary routine never satisfied a man like him and never will. Because he can stop the flow of water to Mars and watch his own people crying for water if it serves his purposes to incite them against Earth. I'll get him, Laura. I promise you that."

He wrapped General Olmstead's body in an old Federation flag which he found in a rear cabin of the warp ship. "It isn't the globe and stars of Earth," he said softly, "but it's the Federation my father stood for, the real Federation."

Laura nodded. "Dad would have wanted it that way."

Alan carried his flag-draped burden to the airlock, placed it in the chamber, then stepped back and bolted the inner door. Laura stood silently for a moment with her head bowed while Alan recited what he could remember of the 23rd Psalm. Somehow, it cleaned some of the hatred from his system and left cold clear purpose in its place. The prayer was for his father too and all the free people who had ever died and would ever die fighting tyranny.

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I shall fear no evil, for Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff, they com-

fort me . . . ”

Alan pulled the lever which controlled the outer door of the airlock. General Olmstead found his final resting place in the deep void of space where he had spent most of his life in the service of his fellow men.

CHAPTER VI

“FIVE hundred thousand miles out from Earth,” Laura said, two weeks later.

“I still don’t get it,” Alan admitted. “They didn’t even try to follow us. It’s as if Keifer suddenly didn’t care whether we escaped to Earth or not.”

“Maybe he believes we’re going to have our hands full trying to get Earth to repair the space-warp. Maybe he knows we won’t be able to bother him or interfere with his plans.”

But Alan shook his head, his brow creasing into a frown. “No that’s not it. I just can’t figure it.” He walked to the fore viewport and gazed at the legions of stars against the black velvet immensity of space. In the upper right hand corner of the viewport he could see the Earth-moon system, the larger sphere pale green, mottled with white and brown, the smaller a dazzling white. He realized all at once that he had two

homes. The Mars of his boyhood, the Earth and New Washington University, where he had spent his young manhood. He could never forsake one for the other. He was as much of Earth as he was of Mars, the verdant green richness of the one tugging at him with no less force than the arid, wild frontier of the other.

“See if you can get anything on the radio,” he told Laura. The warp ship’s receiver was a small one not meant for interplanetary distances, but Alan guessed, it could pick up the more powerful Earth stations beamed to space through the Heavyside Layer.

The radio squawked and whistled, then they heard an announcer’s voice faintly. “ . . . of Alan Tremaine’s Federation forces. All Earth is still shocked over Tremaine’s ultimatum. The International Security Council has been meeting in closed session for two days now, with no announced decisions.

“Authoritative sources close to the Council say that President Holland has admitted the Earth is helpless. It has been known for more than a century that man’s science was capable of building a cobalt bomb which, with a weight of perhaps four hundred tons, could poison all life on Earth with radioactivity.

"As we all have known since last Wednesday, this is precisely what Tremaine has in mind. The cobalt bomb is actually a hydrogen bomb with a layer of cobalt isotope surrounding it. While radioactive cobalt tritium from the H-bomb trigger is quickly dispersed and rendered harmless because the half-life of tritium is so short, radioactive cobalt can spread through the Earth's upper atmosphere on the jet-stream, raining lethal gamma rays from pole to pole.

"It is this terrible force which Alan Tremaine has threatened to unleash on the Earth."

"That's a lie!" Laura cried. "You are not even there. It's Keifer, using your name."

Alan nodded grimly. "He couldn't give such an ultimatum himself. The Outworld people wouldn't listen. But if they believe it's my decision . . ."

The commentator was saying: ". . . brief review of the points of Tremaine's ultimatum. One, unconditional surrender of all remaining Earth forces on the Outworlds. Two, repair of the space-warp bringing water from Venus to Mars. Tremaine claims Earth broke the warp, but the government has denied this right along. It is believed Tremaine is instilling hatred for Earth in the Federation peoples with this diabolical lie.

Thrée, total independence for the Outworlds. Four, Tremaine threatens that if the first three conditions are not complied with by tomorrow night, twenty-three hundred hours Greenwich Time, he will unleash the cobalt bomb.

"Since Tremaine's Federation has sundered the space-warp itself, Earth is unable to comply with the second of Tremaine's points. While radar defenses are being alerted on a planet-wide basis; an unmanned rocket with a cobalt-bomb warhead, approaching the Earth at interplanetary speeds, could not be stopped. The Earth government has continued its hourly appeal to Tremaine not to destroy the civilization which has carried mankind out to the planets. So far, Tremaine has not responded."

"He—he wouldn't dare," Laura said as Alan shut the radio. But her voice lacked conviction.

"He might, Laura. He just might do anything. The radioactivity wouldn't last forever. Keifer might be planning to wait until it's dispersed, then return to Earth and extend his plans for empire there. All life would die, but he could replant crops, bring his hand-picked leaders to settle with him, and govern the solar system as a small totalitarian state."

"But I thought he wanted to take

over Earth and all its people."

"He might figure they won't listen to him. If they do, he takes over. If they don't, he goes through with his ultimatum. Either way, he has Earth."

"But Alan. Five billion people . . ."

"I'm going down there," Alan said. "I've got to find out all the details."

"Alan, they'll kill you! They think it's *your* ultimatum, your cobalt bomb."

"If anyone can stop Keifer, I can. The Federation is loyal to me."

"They won't listen to you. They won't let you talk. They'll kill you."

"My father died for what he believed," Alan said. "So did your father. As long as there's a chance, I've got to go down there. Keifer's ultimatum is set for tomorrow night."

IMPULSIVELY, Laura took his hands and squeezed them. "I won't let you throw your life away. I can't lose you now, Alan. I can't. I . . ."

Alan tilted her chin with his hand and looked into her eyes. Her lips were trembling. She was going to cry, he thought. "Darling," he said, "you've got to listen. I love you. I . . . I think I was falling in love with you on the

Mars liner, before all this started to happen. I never had a chance to tell you. I'm telling you now."

"Then you can't . . ."

Their lips came together, gently at first, then fiercely, as if this were their first kiss of love and perhaps their last. "Oh, Alan. Yes, Alan. I love you. So you can't . . ."

"No," Alan told her quietly. "I've got to. Once a great poet of Earth put it so clearly, so much better than I could ever say it. 'How did it go? Something about I could not love thee, dear, so much, lov'd I not honor more.' Do you think for a minute we could live with ourselves or ever look each other in the eye again if we let this happen without trying to stop it?"

"I'm begging you, Alan. They will kill you as soon as you set foot on Earth."

"I said I'm going down there. I am going. But not before I convince you." He spoke long and persuasively. He told her about other lovers, everywhere, about the men and women of Earth, the five billion helpless people who had a right to live their own lives too and fall in love and marry, about the hundreds of millions of Outworlders whose minds and hearts would be fettered by Bennett Keifer if he had his way, about how a man had this double allegiance all his

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life, to the people he loved and to freedom and democracy and the ideas in which he believed. How the one allegiance might make a man think of an island somewhere or a small asteroid where the rest of the world wouldn't matter but how the other allegiance always brought him back to the crowded places, the dangerous places.

Laura kissed him again, sobbing, clinging to him. When finally he let her go, she whispered so low he hardly could hear the words: "You are right, Alan. It's your duty to go."

"Whatever happens, Laura, I love you."

"Keep telling me that all the time, Alan. I don't want to hear anything else. I'm going with you."

He smiled, then shook his head. "You're going to Earth all right. But you're going where you'll be safe."

Then Alan took the ship down, watching the great green globe of Earth swelling up toward them and then the wondrous sight of the continents swimming into view and the vast blue-green seas and the white cottony puffs of cloud formations and wondering if he soon would be saying goodbye to Laura for the last time.

IT was night in New Washington. Outside, you could hear the

familiar street sounds, the jet-cars rushing by, the muted talk of people after the theater down the street closed for the night, the gentle sighing of wind in the trees which spanned the avenue.

Inside the fraternity lodge, everything was quiet. New Washington students were studying in their small rooms; some of them had already retired. Bill Graham, who had been Alan's room-mate in the good days, said: "You know I want to believe you, Alan. We've been friends ever since we started through college together."

"All I want you to do is watch Laura. Don't let her out of your sight."

"But everyone says you gave Earth the ultimatum?"

"Would I be here now if I did? I'm trying to prevent it, Bill. You've got to believe me."

"All I have to do is watch her?"

"Yes. I'm going straight to the President if I can. Something's been bothering me about this ultimatum of Keifer's all along. Now I think I know what it is. I think we have a chance to stop him, Bill. Just a chance, but we can try."

"What about your ship? How did you get through the radar net?"

Alan smiled grimly. "I remembered your registration number, Bill. I had to give it to them. They'll think it was your ship."

"Holy Mac!" Bill Graham cried. "Then they'll think I—"

"If Keifer wins, we'll all be dead tomorrow night anyway. It was the only thing I could do Bill. I had to get through."

Bill Graham chuckled softly, as if it all were very funny. But he reached out and shook Alan's hand. "I'll watch her, Alan."

Alan nodded, turned to Laura and kissed her quickly without saying goodbye. That way, he thought, he had to see her again...

Everything was so normal on the streets of New Washington, it almost made Alan think the Federation uprising, the death of his father and Laura's father, Keifer's ultimatum to Earth—all were part of some wild, impossible dream. The boys and girls were walking hand in hand. The old men were walking their dogs or taking their evening constitutionals or stopping on street corners to talk with their friends. The theater marquees were gay and well-lighted. It was only when you studied the faces and saw the lines of worry, the furrowed brows, the thoughtful, furtive looks, only when you listened to the conversations and heard "Tremaine's ultimatum" . . . "nothing we can do" . . . "helpless" . . . "he wouldn't dare" . . . "I'm going to pretend nothing's wrong and just go right on living till tomorrow

night" . . . "what else can you do?" . . . "dear God, what else?" . . . it was only then that you knew.

Alan took a bus to the center of the city and fell in with a group of reporters converging on the White House. One of them was saying, "About time they let us in on this. That International Security Council hasn't uttered a peep since the ultimatum, but they've been meeting continuously."

"Ought to make a few banner headlines," another man said.

"So what? After tomorrow night, there won't be any more headlines—or anything. If I could just get that Tremaine here, how I'd love to choke the life out of him with these two hands."

"You and about five billion other people."

THEY entered the White House grounds. Ahead of them, the stately white building was ablaze with light. Guards were stationed at all the entrances.

The reporters began to queue up in single file as two uniformed men examined their credentials. His heart pounding, Alan let the line carry him forward. All the doors were guarded. If he could not get in this way, he could not get in at all.

Finally, he was saying: "Adams, New York Times."

"Your press card, Mr. Adams?"
"I left it at the hotel."
The guard shook his head. "Sorry. You'll have to get it."

"I don't want to miss the press conference."

The guard looked up and shouted, "Anyone else from the New York Times here?"

A man behind Alan nodded.

"You know this fellow?"

The man studied Alan, then shrugged. "Don't think so. I never forget a face."

"He says he's from the Times."

"The devil he is."

"Who are you?" the guard asked Alan.

For answer, Alan shoved him out of the way and plunged inside the building. His feet pounded a loud tattoo on the polished marble floor as he sprinted down the corridor. There were shouts and the pounding of more feet behind him. He followed an arrow which pointed straight ahead above the words PRESS ROOM. He climbed a broad marble staircase. The voices were louder behind him, the click-clacking feet closer.

Breathing harshly, he charged through the doorway to the press gallery. He stopped in his tracks.

The International Security Council was assembled in special session, ready to meet the reporters and their questions. Alan rec-

ognized the faces, the gaunt, weary but somehow intensely warm features of President Holland, the other faces, all grave and tired, about the horseshoe-shaped table.

The guards sprinted up behind Alan, pinning his arms to his sides.

The Secretary General of the International Security Council, seated at President Holland's right, looked up and said, "What is the trouble here?"

"Begging your pardon, sir," the first guard explained, "this man has no proper identification."

President Holland glanced up at Alan, the deep-set eyes studying him. "I've seen that face before," he said. "I don't know where, but I'm sure I've seen him."

"Come on, bud," the guard told Alan. "You're going to answer some questions downstairs." He led Alan back toward the door.

Wrenching his arms free, Alan ran back toward the horseshoe-shaped table. The eyes of the ministers of all the federated Earth states were on him. He took a deep breath and said, "Gentlemen, I am Alan Tremaine."

CHAPTER VII

ALAN remembered only vaguely what happened then. Side-arms were whipped out by the guards. One dignified member of

the Council lunged across the table, dignity forgotten, and tried to slap Alan. The reporters, sensing something important when Alan had broken away from the guards downstairs and plunged inside the White House, had entered the room. Now the television cameras were grinding. There was not a friendly face in the room.

"Listen to me!" Alan shouted. He could not make himself heard over the babble of excitement in the room. He pounded on the table and cried, "You've got to listen! Do you think I came here to die with all of you and all Earth tomorrow night? Do you?"

The guards held him again, one of them wrenching his right arm up and back painfully. The members of the Security Council were grim-lipped and silent. One of them restrained the Minister from France, who was still trying to get at Alan: "You . . . you are the worst traitor since Judas Iscariot," the Minister from France told Alan.

"I never sent that ultimatum," Alan shouted. "I wouldn't be here if I did. Are you going to listen to me?"

There was an angry murmuring from the horseshoe-shaped table. A reporter broke away from his companions and swung his fist awkwardly at Alan's face. "You have

that coming," he said "from five billion Earthmen."

Even the members of the Council seemed to approve. Some of them stood up and came around the table toward Alan menacingly. Laura's words screamed inside Alan's skull—*they'll kill you.*

"Stop!" President Holland's firm voice boomed across the room. "Are we all animals here? Tremaine has the right to speak. With the Earth about to die, are we not even going to clutch at straws? Tremaine knows we can keep him here until tomorrow night, yet he came. I want to hear him. I will hear him if I have to do it alone."

The Ministers assumed their places at the table sheepishly. The television cameras panned closer to Alan. He could sense it: five billion people were watching him.

He talked rapidly. He didn't know, how long they would listen. He told them how he had gone to Mars to take his father's place, told them how Richard Tremaine, then Eugene Talbrick had been murdered in cold blood by Bennett Keifer because he favored violence and complete dissolution of the union and they did not. He told them how Keifer still intended to use the name of Tremaine because Alan's father had been loved by the Outworlders and respected by the government of Earth. He

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told them how General Olmstead had been taken and eventually killed. They were listening now. Still doubtful, but listening. He could sense that some of the hostility had gone from them. They were weary now, and without hope in their eyes.

He went on, "I still think more than half the Outworlders would rally behind me. Maybe I don't deserve their faith, but they remember my father who spent his whole life and finally died in their cause. Let them know I'm here. Beam it to the Outworlds. Tell them I renounce Keifer as a traitor to his own people and to the Earth that spawned them. I'll talk if you want. I'll go on the air."

"Fool!" cried the Minister from France bitterly. "Even if it would work, what does it matter? Tomorrow we all die."

"There's a chance you won't," Alan said. "I'm coming to that. To bring you up to date, I landed on Earth a few hours ago and left General Olmstead's daughter with a friend at the PBT Fraternity House of New Washington University. You can check everything I said with her."

"You said there was a chance . . ."

"Yes. When did Keifer give his ultimatum?"

"Forty eight hours ago."

"That's what I figured. Unless the cobalt bomb was on its way to Earth for at least eight or ten days, it couldn't reach here from Mars or Venus by tomorrow night!"

"Then you mean it's all a bluff?" the Secretary General demanded, hope springing into his eyes.

"**N**o," Alan admitted. "It's no bluff. Two weeks ago, Keifer shut the flow of water through the space-warp from Venus to Mars. Now I realize why. He did it partly to get the people of Mars behind him when he issued his own ultimatum. He didn't want a revolution on his hands. But he did it for another reason, too.

"Gentlemen, if you know your astronomy, you'd know that a fairly rare astronomical event has happened. Venus, Earth and Mars are all in conjunction on the same side of the sun. To put it another way, Venus, with the shortest, fastest orbit, has overtaken the Earth's orbital position with respect to the sun. That's known as the synodic year. Earth has likewise overtaken slower Mars, so the three planets are lined up . . ."

"Imbecile!" screamed the Minister from France. "Here you stand, giving us astronomical puzzles, while Earth hovers on the brink of disaster."

"It's important," Alan said patiently. "Venus, Earth and Mars are in a line right now, Venus and Earth separated by some twenty-eight million miles, Earth and Mars by less than forty million. What I'm saying is this: Keifer didn't block Venusian water from the space-warp merely to rally the Outworlders behind him when he claimed you were responsible. He did it because the space-warp now passes within a couple of hundred thousand miles from Earth. He did it because he intends to transport the cobalt bomb here through the space-warp. I say that's the only way he can get it here in time!"

President Holland stood up, his face white, excitement in his eyes. "Yes," he said. "Yes, it's possible. We'll check the data with the New Washington Naval Observatory at once. If what you say is true, Tremaine . . ."

"It almost has to be true, sir. Keifer will need a launching site for his cobalt bomb after he takes it from the space-warp, but I have a hunch you'll find when you call the observatory that the moon's orbital position at this time passes within a few hundred miles of the space-warp. I say Keifer will launch his cobalt bomb at the Earth from the moon."

Now the reporters suddenly

friendly, were asking Alan so many questions that President Holland had to drag Alan away from them. A special jet took Alan, the President and a few advisors to the Naval Observatory, where Alan's theory was confirmed. One of the astronomers told President Holland jubilantly, "All you have to do is send a fleet out to where the space-warp intersects the orbit of the moon and . . ."

"How can we?" President Holland groaned. "We've dispatched almost all our ships to Mars, Venus and the Jovian moons to help put down the Outworld insurrections. We're left with a few obsolete, ancient ships."

"It doesn't matter," Alan said. "Keifer's in the same boat. His own ships have to defend the Outworlds. He'll only have a small fleet there, if any. He's depending on surprise, don't you see? Even if your ships couldn't get through, I'd have a chance. I'm Alan Tremaine. Tremaine. The Outworlders still think I'm in charge. They'll have to let me through."

"You'll leave at once," President Holland told him. "In the three hours since you've been here, Alan Tremaine, you've given us new hope." He placed his hand on Alan's shoulder, looking at him long and searchingly. "All Earth

must put its hope in you now. We don't have time to check your story thoroughly. We can't. Tremaine, never did so many people put their fate so completely in one man's hands as all Earth is putting its fate in yours. If you're lying, if you're telling the truth but wrong in your theory, life on Earth perishes. All life, Tremaine."

"I've got to be right, sir," Alan told the President. "I've got to."

President Holland smiled. "I'm tired, Tremaine. We're all tired, but we've got to go on. What ships we have will be ready to leave in an hour."

An hour, Alan thought. Now was the time to say goodbye to Laura. Now, with Earth solidly behind him. Now he could tell her of his hopes for the future, which did not seem so bleak. He must see her before he blasted off for the final reckoning with Keifer.

NO sounds came from the fraternity house in New Washington University. He called Bill Graham's name, but heard nothing. "Laura?" he said. "Laura, where are you?" The place seemed completely deserted.

"Alan Tremaine, is that you?" He whirled—and grinned. Mrs. Moriarity, the fraternity house mother, stood below him on the stairs.

"I thought I recognized your voice, young man. My hearing isn't so good anymore."

"Where's Bill Graham?"

"Upstairs, I suppose. He had some visitors before, Alan. Two men. I . . . I didn't like them. I didn't think Bill would have such friends. And Alan, they came downstairs with a lady. A woman! She must have been in Bill's room. There was an awful rumpus up there, then they came down. I'm going to give Bill Graham a talking to, you can bet."

Alan rushed upstairs without answering. Mrs. Moriarity was still talking, her voice carrying up from below. "How did you like your trip to Mars, Alan? I meant to ask you." Her own small world went on. The bigger world hadn't mattered for years, still didn't matter, even now.

Bill Graham's room was a shambles. Furniture turned over, the desk on its side, the bed . . .

Bill Graham was on the floor. He lay with his hands in front of his face. His final gesture had been an instinctive one of protection. Half his face had been sheared away horribly by an atomic blast.

Laura was gone.

Final reckoning with Keifer, Alan thought. Bill Graham. Happy-go-lucky. A big kid who hadn't quite

grown up yet. Give you the shirt off his back. Now he was dead.

How? Alan thought of it briefly and vaguely. It hardly mattered. It seemed impossible, too—but other things were more important. Except for Bill Graham and Alan, only the reporters, guards and Ministers at the Security Council meeting had known where Laura was. Alan had told them.

There was a traitor among them.

The traitor had come here and taken Laura, killing Graham when he tried to prevent it.

Laura was bound for the moon, Keifer's final trump card.

Alan shook his fist impotently, then slammed it down on the overturned desk. *I'm coming, Laura*, he thought.

I'm coming, Bennett Keifer.

CHAPTER VIII

“**S**IX ships,” President Holland told Alan at the New Washington Spaceport. “That’s all we could make ready in time, Tremaine. Six battered line ships, out of commission for five years. It’s all we had.”

“I’m sorry, sir,” a man in the uniform of a four star general told the President. “We sent all our power to the Outworlds.”

“You couldn’t do anything else, General,” President Holland said.

“We had received no ultimatum then. It seemed incredible Keifer or anyone would dare attack the Earth.”

“I’ll get through,” Alan said.

Flood lights stabbed out across the dark field, criss-crossing it with brilliant beams of light. Ground crews scurried like insects caught in their glare, fueling the six spaceships, checking them, trying to accomplish an extensive reconditioning job in minutes.

Soon the spacecrews were jogging out on the field in bulky blast-suits, small gleaming figures in the light of the floods. On one of the ships Alan saw the blue and gold symbol of the Outworld Federation, freshly painted, side by side with the globe and stars of Earth.

“You’re blasting off for the good people of the Federation as well as for the Earth,” President Holland explained. “We’ve radio’d the Outworlds and told them. We don’t know the effect, if any.”

“Keifer will have his hands full,” Alan said. “I hope.”

The jogging figures of the spacemen had separated into six groups of half a dozen men each, one group for each of the battered old ships.

“There’s a launching site at the old, abandoned Terra Mines in Tycho Crater on the moon,” President Holland told Alan. “If you

don't get Keifer at the space-warp and stop him there, you'll probably find him in Tycho."

President Holland and the four star general were walking across the dark field with Alan now, toward the lead ship, standing on its tail in the glare of the flood lights. "All Earth is blasting off with you, Tremaine," the President said.

He shook hands solemnly with Alan. So did the General. Alan closed the airlock door behind him, heard a plopping sound as the airtight rubberoid fabric of the circular door gripped the hull and sealed it. The spacemen were at their stations, not talking, not smoking. Waiting.

Through the viewport, Alan watched President Holland and the General trotting out of the blast-off area.

Alan walked into the control room, past the grim, silent crew, each man stationed at his obsolete equipment. Half a dozen overage ships, with Earth's fate in the balance.

And Laura up there somewhere.

"Let's go," Alan said.

The rocket engines whined and shrieked into life. Alan and the pilot strapped themselves into blast chairs. The roar was deafening. Alan could feel his face contorted by eight G's pressure as the ancient spaceship blasted off. Then, his

muscles bunched in agony, he blacked out.

DAZZLING white with reflected sunlight but pock-marked with craters, shadowed with deep valleys and gorges, sundered by great rock faults, puckered with vast bleak mountain ranges the moon swept up at them.

"That reporter wants to see you now, Mr. Tremaine," the pilot told Alan.

"I haven't time for — what? What reporter?"

"The one President Holland sent along to cover the story for Earth."

"He didn't tell me—" Alan began, then shrugged. The reporter would be a nuisance, but it hardly mattered. "No interviews now," Alan said. "Tell him we're not going to land on the moon—yet. Tell him we're looking for the space-warp."

Gem-bright, unblinking, the stars of space gleamed through the viewport. Star-maps were spread on the floor of the small control cabin, crew members pouring over them. Somewhere out there, space should look different. Somewhere, starlight should be cut off by a narrow band of blackness—the space-warp. They had to find it, and they had to hurry. It made good sense to tell the Outworlders Alan had denounced Bennett Keifer as a traitor,

for some of them might not fire on Alan's six small ships. But it also presented a danger: Keifer would probably abandon the hour of his ultimatum and rush ahead with his plans. They had mere minutes to find the space-warp. Perhaps already it was too late.

With the pilot taking over, Alan kneeled on the floor and studied the star-maps, calling out grid-coordinates while a man at the viewports checked them against space itself. Soon his head was swimming with the multitudes of white dots on the blueprint paper, with the white graph lines, the swarms of stars. "Sixteen-eleven," he said, "Deneb, Vega, Altair . . . Sixteen-twelve, Pollux, Procyon, Sirius . . ." "Check . . . check . . ." "Seventeen, one, Achernar, Canopus . . ." "Check . . ." "Check, *check*, CHECK!

"Nineteen, three, Capella, Regulus, Alpha Centauri . . . Nineteen, four . . ."

"Hold it! Wait a minute, Mr. Tremaine. If you draw a line from Capella through Regulus to Centauri, what else should you cross?"

Alan looked at his map. "You come close to Castor and Pollux, close to Cancer, you cross the constellations Crater and Corvus."

"Not out here, you don't."

Then Alan was running to the viewport. Between bright, unblinking Regulus and even brighter Alpha Centauri was—nothing. A hole in space. A long, narrow path of intense, unbroken blackness.

"That's it!" Alan shouted. He felt like laughing, like pounding the man's back, like dancing a jig. They had found the space-warp.

Alan ran to the pilot chair, swinging the small ship around almost ninety degrees. In the rear viewscreen he could see the five other ships wheeling about and following.

And something else—in front of them. Specks moving across the firmament in tight formation, growing.

Keifer's fleet.

HE counted fifteen ships, each larger and with more firepower than his own, guardians of the space-warp, rocketing down toward them from where Corvus should have been, from the hole in space behind which the constellation Crater hid.

Alan flicked his radio toggle to the on position, said into it: "This is Alan Tremaine calling the Outworld fleet. Tremaine calling! Do you hear me?"

"Go back to Earth, Tremaine.

IMAGINATION

We don't want to kill you."

"I'm flying the flags of Earth and the Federation. If you listen to me, it still isn't too late for Equal Union. I denounce Bennett Keifer as a traitor to Earth and the Outworld Federation, as my father would have done."

"Go back to Earth, Tremaine."

Alan shook his head, then scrambled the radio frequency to his small fleet's band. "Flagship calling," he said. "We're heading for the warp. Hold off the Federation fleet at all costs."

And, to the pilot: "Take her in, Stan. I'm getting into spacegear."

Five obsolete ships against the Federation's bigger fleet. A sixth ship to reach the warp and hover there while Alan explored. The odds against them seemed tremendous, but Alan brushed them from his mind. Swiftly, he climbed into a bulky spacesuit, inflating it while one of the crew secured the glassite helmet over his head. He tested the suit radio, secured a set of personnel jets to his shoulders, then clomped into the airlock with an atomic rifle, slamming the ammo pan into place in the breech. He stood impatiently at the outer door of the airlock, looking through the small viewport into space. Spinning in a great wheel formation, the three-dimensional equivalent of the ancient naval

maneuver called crossing the T, the Federation fleet spun toward them.

Out to meet it—five ships, darting like silver midges at the giant wheel.

All at once, energy erupted searingly before his eyes as the fleets met. Two ships in the Federation wheel darkened and fell, tumbling end over end, out of rank. But one Earth ship was blown to pieces. If the rate of attrition continued . . .

He didn't think about it. He spun the mechanism which controlled the outer airlock door and pulled himself out on the hull of the ship. The battle formations were drifting behind him now. Ahead—the black tube of the space-warp.

Pointing himself toward the blackness, Alan fired his shoulder jets.

HERE along the vast track of the warp, a station hung in space. As it swelled up toward him, Alan could make out three tiny figures, three men in spacesuits, watching him.

Space erupted violently about him as two of the figures raised atomic rifles to their shoulders and fired. Switching his jets on and off, Alan darted erratically through space to present a difficult target.

He was a hundred yards from

the warp-station now. Overhead, his flagship was hovering on the sunward side of the station, casting a huge black shadow across it. Aiming carefully, Alan fired his own atomic rifle.

One of the figures collapsed on the surface of the station. The second was still firing at him. The third, unarmed, was watching. Alan swung quickly around to the dark side of the small globe, strapped the rifle to his shoulders, alighted on his hands and cart-wheeled upright. Without pausing for breath, he unstrapped the rifle, held it ready at his hip and sprinted around the station.

Two heads bobbed into view on the incredibly close horizon. Alan and the Federation soldier fired simultaneously. Alan could feel the heat of the blast through his spacesuit. Before his eyes, his glassite helmet fused. A bare slit remained for him to see through.

But the second Federation soldier had fallen.

"I'm unarmed!" the third man screamed over his suit radio.

Alan recognized Captain — no, Major — Haddix's voice. "Lead me to the warp, Major," he said. "No tricks."

Seconds later, Alan was following the spacesuited figure across the smooth black surface of the warp-station. He passed one of the

fallen soldiers, a gash torn in the fabric of his spacesuit. The body and head had swelled horribly against the suddenly unequal pressure. The thing inside the suit did not look human.

Major Haddix stopped at the brink of the space-warp, waiting for Alan with his back to the pit.

"Has the bomb come through yet?" Alan demanded.

Major Haddix made a lewd gesture, but his face paled behind the glassite helmet when Alan raised the atomic rifle and calmly began squeezing the trigger.

"Wait! I'll tell you. Don't point that thing"

"Talk, damn you."

"It's already on the moon, Tremaine. Keifer changed his plans when he knew you were coming. But take it from me, you don't have a chance."

"What about General Olmstead's daughter?"

"She's with him, I think. Listen, Tremaine. Go easy. I'm only a professional soldier. I do what I'm told."

At that moment, a second shadow darted across the surface of the warp-station. Instinctively, Alan looked up. A Federation ship had come to do battle with the Earth ship hovering there, flashing by it and unleashing a salvo of raw energy. The Earth ship was

swinging around to bring its own atomics to bear . . .

And then Haddix was upon him, clawing for the atomic rifle. They struggled there at the lip of the space-warp, the weapon between them. Slowly, Alan felt himself being forced around, felt nothing but space below his left foot as he tried to step back. Immediately behind him was the warp, and instant, horrible death if he fell in.

Haddix's gauntletted fist struck his glassite helmet, jarring him. Alan swung his arms wildly for balance, then remembered his personnel jets and switched them on, pivoting around at the same instant. Borne aloft by his shoulder rockets, Alan and Haddix spun dizzily over the abyss.

It was Haddix's own blind fury that killed him.

He swung his fists at Alan, trying to shatter the already damaged glassite helmet. He forgot that Alan alone wore the jets.

Alan watched the figure tumbling below him, head over heels, slowly, as in a dream. Haddix's voice came to him once over the radio in a hideous scream. Then the spacesuited form was swept into the warp, where it twisted, was bent and broken . . .

Overhead, the Earth ship hovered. Far away, the gutted hulk of the Federation craft which had

come to challenge it was drifting off into space. Alan jetted for the Earth ship.

HANDS lifted the helmet from his head; deflated and unfastened the spacesuit. "How are the others making out?" Alan gasped.

"They're gone. All gone. Five ships, five brave crews . . ."

"And the Federation?"

"Three ships left."

"Can we beat them to the moon?"

"We can try."

Just then the reporter joined Alan and the two crewmen in the companionway. "You'll reach the moon, all right," he said.

He was pointing an atomic pistol at them.

CHAPTER IX

COLD and lifeless, the surface of the moon expanded before them. The six man crew of the spaceship sat in the control cabin. Alan was at the controls. The reporter stood at the door, facing them with his back to the companionway. The atomic pistol was unwavering in his hand.

"You were at the Security Council meeting," Alan said bitterly. "You're working for Keifer. You sent those men to kidnap Laura. Then, in the confusion at the

spacefield, you claimed the President had designated you to cover the story for Earth, and—”

The reporter nodded. “A man’s a fool not to join the winning side while he can. You’ll take this ship down in Tycho crater. You’ll land near the old Terra Mines dome. They’ll drag you in through the domelock with a tractor beam. You’ll be able to watch them launch the bomb to Earth.”

Jagged, pock-marked and buried in its mantle of pumice, the surface of the moon sped by below them. Dark, somber *maria*, the broad deep valleys of the moon, appeared, were reached and left behind. Rills cut tortuously across the moonscape; rays like molten gold radiated from some of the craters.

Finally, the great ringwall of Tycho crater flashed into view. At one side, just inside the ringwall of the crater and more than two-score miles from the lonely central peaks, the glassite dome which had housed Terra Mines in the early days of space travel could be seen.

Alan brought the spaceship down on its tail, its rocket exhaust blasting the pumice below with blistering heat.

There was still time, Alan thought.

But they were helpless.

He wondered if, in decisive mo-

ments, history was full of such traitors—men like the reporter who would soon bring civilization on Earth, life on Earth, to an end when he returned Alan and his crew over to Keifer’s Federation forces within the dome. He shrugged — then wondered also how strongly a man had to believe to forfeit his life for a principle.

For if he tried anything, the reporter would kill him.

If he didn’t, you could count the time remaining for Earth in hours.

Abruptly, he slapped his hand across the firing lever, heard the surge of sudden power at the same moment that the ship rocked and plunged moonward on its side. There were shouts behind him in the cabin. There was a split-second of confusion.

Alan spun around and dove across the room for the reporter. The man had fallen and was just climbing to his feet when Alan reached him. He must have decided there was no time to fire. Instead, he hurled the heavy weapon at Alan.

It struck his shoulder, fell away. Then he was on the reporter, reaching for his throat, choking him, strangling . . . Hands dragged him clear.

“He’s unconscious,” someone said. “Lay off, Tremaine.”

IMAGINATION

There was a lurch as tractor beams from the dome caught and held the spaceship. They were tugged through the domelock but all were heavily-armed with atomic rifles and pistols when the ship came to a stop inside.

ANOTHER ship lay on its side within the half-mile-in-diameter dome. A dozen men stood about, waiting for them to be delivered like sheep.

Alan led his men outside into the cool, canned air of the dome. Their concentrated fire was unexpected and deadly, dropping the Federation men where they stood. Three or four of them managed to crawl behind the second ship, from where they returned the fire. One of Alan's men fell.

"Quick!" Alan cried. "Three of you cut around the front of the ship. Stan and I will slip around the tail rockets."

Without waiting for an answer, he led the pilot through a fierce barrage of atomic pellets toward the rear of the spaceship. As the missiles struck the ground on all sides of them, they exploded violently, kicking up man-tall geysers of luna pumice.

"You're covered from both sides!" Alan shouted, poking his head cautiously around the rocket tubes. His answer was a stream

of atomic pellets, which struck the tubes and fused them. Ignoring the deadly fire, Alan plunged on, feeling the kick of his own atomic rifle as he triggered shot after shot blindly ahead of him.

There were two, men left alive back there, standing back to back, trembling, their hands high over their heads.

"Where's Keifer?" Alan barked at them.

One pointed vaguely outside the dome. "The central mountains," he said.

"What are you talking about?"

"A shipload of technicians brought the bomb there from the space-warp. That's where Terra Mines had its launching equipment. Honest. I swear it's the truth."

"Is Keifer there too?"

"Yes. With the girl. They went out in one of Terra Mines' old luna tanks to watch the launching."

"When is it?"

"Half an hour, maybe less," the Federation soldier said. "You couldn't stop them. You'll never get there in time."

"Is there another tank?"

The soldier nodded, pointed across the pumice to a squat green vehicle with caterpillar treads. Alan was already running for it and calling over his shoulder. "Stay here. If the remaining Federation

ships try to come down, use the dome-guns on them. Stan, you come with me."

The pilot sprinted after him. Together they entered the moon tank, which was not airtight. They found Terra Mines spacesuits inside, the ancient, long-unused type that looked like deep sea suits. The tank's rocket engine sputtered and caught. The tank lumbered toward the domelock and through it while they doffed the spacesuits.

Then they were bouncing soundlessly across the airless surface of Tycho crater, leaving the dome far behind them. Earth was above them in the sky, in the quarter-phase. You could see part of North America reflecting sunlight. Blue-black, the Pacific Ocean was in shadow.

Ahead loomed the central mountains of Tycho crater, biting into the black sky, saw-toothed, for fifteen thousand feet. On labored the moon tank, climbing now, its old engine whining a protest against the steep grade, the sound echoing strangely inside the vehicle because outside in the luna vacuum it could not be heard at all. They crossed the first peak of the range, looked down on a great cauldron in the rock, a crater within the crater, a mile across.

At one end was a Federation spaceship, standing on its tail rock-

ets and pointing up at the sky like a gleaming needle.

At the other end was the launching platform, massive, indistinct in the gloomy shadows of the mountains. On the platform, partially out of shadow, rested the cobalt bomb, big as a small spaceship.

Another tank sped toward them across the uneven moonscape. Two men were perched atop it in red spacesuits, firing already although they were still out of range.

ALAN tapped Stan on the shoulder, told the pilot he was going outside. He slipped through the hatch and climbed on top of the lurching tank, squatting there and slamming a fresh ammo pan into his atomic rifle.

The trip across the crater had consumed ten minutes of the time left for Earth. What remained—twenty minutes? Twenty-five?

Suddenly, the moon tank shuddered beneath Alan's feet. They had come within range sooner than he had expected. He felt himself hurled away, and tumbled across the rocks as the tank burst briefly into flame, devouring in seconds the oxygen stored in the fuel tanks. With an eerie, noiseless blast, the tank exploded.

Alan scrambled forward across the rocks. Somehow, he had managed to hold his atomic rifle. He

wondered if the mechanism had been damaged by his fall.

He didn't have time to think about it. The other tank, now less than fifty yards away, was coming toward him. He fired once, forced to reveal his position. A space-suited figure fell from the tank, but another climbed up through the hatch to join the man still kneeling there.

The tank was thirty yards away now, still coming.

Concealed partially behind an out cropping of rock, Alan fired again, saw a second figure tumble off the roof of the tank, rolling down a steep incline. The third man was returning his fire, but wildly. At the last moment he tried to scramble within the hatch, but his glassite helmet exploded as one of Alan's pellets caught it.

The tank was upon him, its caterpillar treads rolling soundlessly across the rock. Flinging his rifle out of the way, Alan dove between the two great treads and clung there. He could feel the jagged rocks cutting into his spacesuit, scraping it, weakening the fabric. In seconds, the fabric would rupture.

There was a hatch on the underbelly of the tank. Dragged along, Alan held on with one hand and pried at the hatch with the other. He was bruised and shaken by the

rocks.

The hatch swung clear.

Alan chinned himself into the tank. A spacesuited figure sat over the controls. Another one was staring at Alan through the glassite helmet of a modern spacesuit.

It was Laura.

He didn't know if she would recognize him through the visor of his ancient suit. She screamed, "Alan! Look out!"

Keifer was rising from the controls, plunging toward him. Alan met him half way over the open hatch, grappled with him there. In Keifer's hand was an atomic pistol. He couldn't bring it down to bear on Alan, but was beating him across the head with it, the sound of metal striking metal booming in Alan's ears. If his helmet had been glassite, he thought, Keifer could have killed him.

He lost his footing and slipped, spread-eagling over the open hatch. Keifer fell on him, pushing, trying to force him through. "You can't stop the bomb," he said, his voice cold and metallic over the suit radio. "It's all automatic now."

For answer, Alan swung his metal-shod fists at Keifer's glassite helmet. He felt himself slipping. In seconds, Keifer's weight would drive him through the hatch. He pounded the glassite helmet above him. Blindly, he kept on pounding

it. His legs were slipping, dangling through the hatch over the jagged rocks. The slightest rip in the fabric of his suit would bring instant death.

All at once, a crack appeared in Keifer's helmet, running from crown to chin. Alan struck again with his right fist. The crack became a hole. Keifer opened his mouth to scream, but then his face was swelling, bloated—became a shapeless thing which no longer could fit within the helmet.

Trembling, Alan stood up and rushed to the control. He saw that Laura was already heading the moon tank back toward the launching platform. He had a few seconds in which to play . . .

The tank lurched to a stop beside the platform.

HAND over hand, Alan was climbing the scaffold. He reached the platform with the tank's atomic rifle strapped across his shoulders. Half a dozen technicians were preparing to leave.

"Shut it off!" Alan shouted. Don't launch that bomb!"

"We can't stop it now. The mechanism is set."

"I'll kill you if I have to."

"We can't, don't you understand? The bomb will be launched in five minutes—no, four minutes and fifty seconds now. Once set, it's fully

automatic. We didn't want to set it. Keifer made us do it. You're Alan Tremain, aren't you?" the technician asked. "We're on your side, Tremain. Most of the Outworlds are, ever since Earth's broadcast. But Keifer came here with a hard core of his followers in a small fleet and—"

"Never mind the talk. Can't you render the bomb harmless?"

The technician shook his head within the glassite helmet.

Overhead, the quarter-phase Earth was shining brightly, waiting helplessly.

"It's the radioactive cobalt that will do the damage," Alan said. "An atomic trigger for the hydrogen bomb, a hydrogen trigger for the cobalt, right?"

"Essentially, yes."

"Then strip off the cobalt, you fools!"

"Three minutes," someone said. "We've got to get out of here. The after-burners of the launching charge will cremate us."

"It can be done," one of the technicians told Alan, "but I don't think you have the time."

"How, man? Tell me how!"

"Use your rifle. There's a seam running around the bomb. See? See it. If you can cut around the whole seam, the cobalt should fall away in two hemispheres. A hydrogen bomb alone would be launch-

ed at Earth, but it should fall harmlessly into the Pacific Ocean."

"Two minutes, forty seconds."

The technicians moved about uneasily. Two of them began to climb down the scaffold. The rest remained to watch Alan. They would save the Earth or perish with him.

Alan raised his atomic rifle to his shoulder, aimed at the thin-welded seam about the huge bomb, and began to fire. At first there was nothing. The pellets hit the bomb, which could only be triggered by an atomic implosion at its core, and exploded there.

"A minute and a half," someone said, his voice hoarse over Alan's suit radio.

The seam was widening, became a gap a foot across. Alan continued firing, the rifle slapping back against his numb shoulder. The crack spread around the circumference of the bomb.

"One minute to blast-off!"

Alan fired his last volley, stood there in despair. He had run out of ammunition.

The cobalt outer skin of the bomb shook, spread apart, fell away in two equal hemispheres. The technicians were plunging down the scaffold, Alan right behind them. They tumbled inside the moon

tank.

Laura didn't have to be told. The tank bounced away at full speed.

Behind them, a brilliant flash lit the lunar sky. For a moment, Alan could see the hydrogen bomb streaking Earthward, a silver speck against the blackness. Then it was gone. It was a vast trigger now, and nothing more. Harmlessly, it would explode in the Pacific Ocean, like dozens of tests which had been conducted there.

The Outworlds would agree to Equal Union now. Alan knew that. The technician had told him. They had never liked the war. They were ready to rally behind his name. There would be some ugliness between Earth and the Outworlds for a time, because of what had almost happened. But it would pass.

The Lunar Mines dome loomed ahead of them. The dome-lock opened to admit them.

"I wish we were inside already," Laura said, "where there's some air."

"What for?" Alan asked her.

"So I can take off this helmet and kiss you."

Nothing would suit Alan better. Now, at last, they were inside. He took off his helmet.

For FREE BOOK-SUBSCRIPTION OFFER See Page 130



Whirly-Birds!



THE future of transportation lies not in 300-horsepower automobiles, nor in super-buses or jet aircraft. The humble work-horse of transportation will be the helicopter!

Modern cities are choking and strangling to death because of the press of traffic from which there seems no relief. The one way out is to use the third dimension and the only craft capable of this from a quantity standpoint is the ubiquitous helicopter. Transportation authorities are of a mind that within

a few decades, the helicopter will take over the chore of the modern city's bus transport.

The recent flight of the squadron of helicopters to England demonstrates their versatility. Actually the huge, clumsy, but efficient 'copters now in the experimental stage are the answer to congested transportation and the engineers know it. It's another triumph for science-fiction enthusiasts who predicted that one of the things the future holds most strongly is the "whirly-bird"!



"NOW, what's eating you, Morrison?"

Nathanial Evergood was an eccentric old man with a photographic passion for pretty girls. So he invented a camera lens for special effects—

And All The Girls Were Nude

by

Richard Magruder

APPEARANCES oftentimes can be deceiving, and things most certainly *aren't* always as they seem. Take the case of Nathanial Evergood, for instance.

The nature of this old man was such that nobody ever called him Nat, not even his closest working companions in the company's bookkeeping department. As long as any of them had ever known Nathanial Evergood there had never been the slightest indication of any desire of his for intimacy or even friendship.

Not once had he shared a drink or lunch or relaxed conversation with anyone, so far as his associates knew. To say Nathanial was reserved is putting it mildly.

It would be more accurate to describe this little old man as dull—completely and absolutely dull. In his appearance, his dress, his speech, in every way imaginable.

But, in addition to being quite

dull—as everyone knew, Nathanial Evergood was also a thoroughly evil and obscene old man, as no one knew.

Likely, the main reason no one had ever seen the inside of Nathanial's rooms was the fear within him that his evilness and obscenity might be discovered. For Nathanial Evergood might be called a connoisseur, to slightly distort the meaning of that word. He could be called a connoisseur of femininity—from afar, and in secret, of course. An arbiter of the well-turned thigh, the rounded, dimpled bottom, the tight waist, and the high, firm bosom.

Oh, Nathanial Evergood was a connoisseur, all right. At the investigation he ventured a very rough but conservative guess that he had collected at least fifty thousand pictures of girls, in whole or in part, horizontal or vertical, semi-nude or nude, over the years.



Upon entering his living room (if that were possible), the first thing a casual observer would have noted would be the point of saturation reached by his walls in their photographic content. There were photographs of blonds and brunettes and redheads. There were pictures of thin girls, fat girls, girls with ample bosoms and girls lacking, girls holding telephones, books and ice cream cones, girls sixteen, girls twenty-five, and girls

no longer girls.

There were shots in glorious color by the hundreds, originals and prints alike. But, there wasn't among them one single view of the Grand Canyon. Nor even a solitary Indian astride a tired horse, looking pensively out over the prairie. There *was* a red-skinned maiden, mind you, but she wasn't sitting a horse, and she certainly wasn't staring laconically out over any prairie, either. Rather, she appear-

ed to be testing with her toe the water temperature of a tree-shaded brook somewhere, and she was clad in a lone, strategically-located feather.

On the tea table, in the bookshelves, in the magazine rack, and all through his rooms, one might find other evidence of this evil and obscene old man's preoccupation with womankind. But the kind of woman he was preoccupied with often wasn't the kind that married dear old dad. He subscribed to every girlie publication in the country and to several in France.

SO you see, Nathaniel Evergood was not only a connoisseur, he was also an avid collector. There were books and there were magazines, and there was even a deck of playing cards backed with the most astounding set of pictures you ever saw. That anyone could sit down to a game of Old Maid or Snap with *that* deck of cards is inconceivable, to say the least. But such an evil and obscene old man as Nathaniel Evergood likely never played games with his cards, anyway. He would much prefer to just sit and look at them; the reverse side, of course.

He later said he probably spent almost half his really quite meager earnings for up-to-date additions to his extensive collection. The girlie

magazines, playing cards and prints he received from various mail order houses, sent, as the advertisements testified, "in a plain, unmarked envelope".

But the other half of his collection—the photographs, mounted, unmounted, matte and glossy enlargements and contact prints—Nathaniel Evergood came by in an entirely different—and somewhat novel—manner. These resulted from his ability as a fairly advanced amateur photographer. Over the years, Nathaniel had acquired three fine cameras, an excellent enlarger, two contact printers, electronic flash units, interchangeable lenses, filters, sun shades and lens caps, extension tubes and tripods. In short, Nathaniel Evergood was well-equipped to take photographs of just about everything.

He had the equipment, and he had the necessary technical knowledge and facility. But, invariably, he passed up the usual pictorial, architectural, human interest, interpretive and abstract photographs, even when the opportunities for truly fine shots were there. Instead, he took roll after roll, pack after pack and cartridge upon cartridge of girls. *Nothing but girls.*

All sorts of girls. Just girls!

At the investigation Nathaniel suggested that the presence of a camera, introduced on the scene

in a gentlemanly and courteous manner, was enough to cause almost frenzied unlocking and unzipping by even the most demure and prudish female. "Ladies," Nathaniel said wisely, "love to have their bodies recorded for posterity."

Oh, he was certainly a very evil and highly obscene old man—was Nathaniel Evergood—if ever you saw one.

But the full import of what his evil old soul and obscene little mind contained would probably escape the casual observer, unless he happened onto a tiny cubbyhole at the back of the rooms occupied by Nathaniel. This was the sanctum sanctorum, so to speak, of his thin little heart, for here Nathaniel Evergood guarded jealously a secret utterly beyond belief.

He fancied himself to be something of an inventor. And he was, too—of a sort. His ardent and relentless pursuit of photographic subject matter during the years had led him into situations demanding full knowledge of his craft, from a technical rather than from an artistic point of view. Thus, this inventive turn of mind was given an able assist by his understanding of the theory, optics and chemistry of photography.

And now, he was just putting the finishing touches to the most

important project in his entire life.

Basing his plan of action on the simple optical theory of astigmatism, Nathaniel designed a lens. Astigmatism, he had learned, results in the human eye, as well as in manufactured lenses of certain formulae, in the failure of horizontal and vertical target lines to reach a common focus. So his lens was designed intentionally astigmatic, allowing focus to be brought on one group of target lines or another, but never on both simultaneously.

To the front of the lens mount he added a front-surfaced prism and a filter, carefully ground and tinted internally the precise color complement of human flesh. He reasoned, quite accurately as it turned out, that the prism would gather all the colors of light together and converge them at the focal plane of the lens as pure white, thus eliminating all color. But, at the same instant, the complement filter replaced last the flesh color of the object focused upon, and subsequently recorded on film.

Then, in one fell swoop, the lens allowed Nathaniel to focus carefully on one group of target lines (in his case, the female form underneath its covering), automatically throwing an opposing group of lines out of focus (the covering over the female body, in his case).

The prism was busily gathering together all color and converting it into pure white light, while lastly, the complementary filter replaced the color of flesh to the image, and finally to the photograph. You see the possibilities, of course. By replacing the normal lens of one fine camera with his invention, Nathaniel Evergood was now equipped to photograph in rich, natural color the female form-divine, unfettered by any or all clothing.

WELL, this day in particular, Nathaniel Evergood stationed himself, poised like a pointer, at his window, camera in hand, invention in place, waiting impatiently for the first likely subject to appear. And, shameful as it must seem, this evil and obscene old man was quite noticeably drooling, right from one side of his pinched little mouth.

He heard the saucy click of her heels on the pavement a full thirty seconds before she swung gracefully into his myopic line of sight. She was blondish. Not *too* blond, understand, but just blond enough. And she was a true-blue blond at heart, if you know what I mean.

Shutter: set, at 1/200 of a second; diaphragm: f/5.6; film; Real-lifecolor; rangefinder: superimposed. Click. Click, click, click! Four shots, four beautiful pictures,

in color, too, before she was gone on down the street.

With incredible speed this evil and obscene old man descended from his window perch and scuttled back to his little cubby hole. He darkened the room and unloaded the automatic sheet film holder: No attempt can be made to describe the gnawing impatience that Nathaniel Evergood felt as he sloshed the sensitized emulsions through the series of solutions for the precise time required for true color rendition, as, after ninety long minutes, he washed the sheets, and finally held them up to the light for a first wide-eyed look.

She was there, alright, his swaying blond. She was there. *All* of her!

Well sir, after filling his eyes—and his evil little mind—with the four lovely images of the girl, Nathaniel Evergood rushed to the downtown camera shop, and wrote out a large check for their entire supply of Real-lifecolor film. Then, back on the street, madly clicking, clicking, clicking. Every pretty girl that came along. *Every* single one!

Oh, he had a time for himself, did this evil, obscene old man.

The next day was Sunday, happily for his designing brain, and there was no work. After a full night in his cubby hole developing sheet after sheet of color film, Na-

thanial went to the beach and, as you must know by now, set his camera shutter clicking like a miniature machine gun.

And, again, the results were spectacular, to put it mildly. The collection grew and grew and grew, and Nathaniel Evergood was never sadder, or never happier. What an obscene man he was!

Now, if Nathaniel had stuck to his camera and to his wonderful invention, this story might never have been written. But, evil and obscene as he was, he soon began to dream of new worlds to conquer.

Simple as it had been to apply the principle of astigmatism to photography—and with such marvelous results—why not apply this same principle to his eyeglasses? This would eliminate the annoying delay of taking pictures, then developing and viewing them. To say nothing of the terrific expense involved.

Usually, when writers say, "No sooner said than done", it is often a gross exaggeration. But Nathaniel *was* quick about it, nevertheless.

In short order, the problems of focus, image distortion and aberrations were ironed out, and Nathaniel ventured once again out into the street to give his newest brain-child its dry-run, so to speak.

The glasses worked all right. They worked just fine. And Nath-

aniel Evergood, in a leering ecstasy, raced up and down the streets, peering with his watery and over-worked eyes this way and that, up and down, all around and back again. For the next day or so Nathaniel was busy as a bee attending every beauty contest and fashion show in town, and even found time for a quick run out to the girl's school.

THE third day following the initial tests of his new seeing-eye glasses, Nathaniel suddenly observed there were an uncommon lot of nicely constructed young ladies right in his own department at the office. An opportunist, if ever there was one, Nathaniel thought it just might be fun to give the remarkable spectacles a chance to separate the women from the girls, and the girls from the children.

This he did and although his work suffered, he spent the better part of the day classifying the office help in various categories, and learning there were at least two ladies who fell in no classification whatsoever. It was the nicest day he had spent at the office in quite some time, he decided.

Not long after that the strain brought on by the frequent changes from his normal reading glasses to the prism spectacles became so intense that he decided

there was really no good reason why he shouldn't just wear them—the new ones, of course—all the time. The better to preserve his vision, and the better to pursue his avocation.

So, he did.

And therein lay the downfall of Nathaniel Evergood.

For, you see, the climax of our story comes a month later, on a sunny July day, when Nathaniel made his decision to take a short stroll among the mid-day lady shoppers downtown.

Understand, with those glasses of his, Nathaniel had become so accustomed to seeing his fellow creatures *au natural*, as it were, that it was on the verge of becoming almost commonplace. But, evil and obscene—as he was, it was still highly diverting yet.

At any rate, on this particular day, Nathaniel had made his way no more than a couple of hundred feet from his front door when a heavy hand was clamped on his shoulder and a rough voice growled, "Where you think *you're* going, you scrawny old buzzard? You oughta know better."

Nathaniel Evergood spun about, suddenly petrified. The uniform, of course, was invisible, and the man was no raving beauty, he'd have said. But there was no mistaking the ugly gun and the shiny badge

and the authoritative tone of voice.

"I beg your pardon," Nathaniel spluttered indignantly. "Just what is the meaning of this ridiculous outrage?"

The beefy Irish cop was even more indignant, though. "Now, just look at yourself. I've seen absent-minded old timers parading down the street with no shoes on, or even no pants on. But just look at yourself; not a *stitch* on!"

Nathaniel Evergood looked down at himself in sudden horrified realization, and looked back up as quickly. "But . . . but," he began, "everybody else . . ." But then, of course, he had to stop.

Well, the upshot of it all was that the officer hauled him back into his rooms to get some clothes on before carting him down to the station house. As it was before they entered the apartment, Nathaniel stood to get ten days probation or a token fine for forgetting all his clothes, Irish cops being ordinarily an understanding lot.

But, when confronted by the staggering array of unclad femininity, this Irishman flushed a deep red, spewed an amazed Irish blasphemy, and then roared like a lion.

And don't think the officer didn't check the evidence carefully—with the proper degree of loathing, of course—before shoving

Nathanial unceremoniously down the street to call the paddy wagon. Of a certainty, things went much worse for the evil, obscene Nathanial Evergood than they might have, had not this righteously outraged policeman done his duty as he saw it.

MATTER of fact, they threw the book at the old boy. But not until a thorough investigation was made, and not until several hundred outraged members of every morals, anti-delinquency and anti-vice committee in town had carefully checked and gasped over all the collected evidence. Never in the history of the city had there been such a hue and a cry aroused for the punishment of an offender.

So, Nathanial Evergood—evil and obscene as ever—got five years for possession of pornography, indecent exposure and other charges. In the words of the presiding jurist at the climax of the spectacular trial, "Such a sentence is far too lenient a punishment for a crime of such enormity."

And, to this very day, there rests in the files of the local constabulary, the voluminous collection of Nathanial Evergood, occupying fourteen huge, well-worn cabinets,

and always on display for the indignant and affronted eyes of any anti-sin committeeman who wishes to examine it.

Also taken as evidence was Nathanial's wonderful prismatic lens and his marvelous glasses. Anytime you're by the station house, drop into the chief's office and, there in the open cabinet opposite his desk, you can see the venal objects. Now though, the lenses are pretty scratched and worn, but they're still the same two inventions of that ingenious, but evil and obscene old man, Nathanial Evergood, No. 5-049,870.

And not that it makes much difference since the case is long past and closed, but it might be interesting to point out that the chief is often seen at beauty contests and fashion shows, wearing thick-lensed glasses, which, he explains, the optometrist prescribed for his failing sight. And I don't know if it's true or not, but they say the chief is also the biggest customer the local camera shops have for a certain product called Real-life-color or film.

Not that it makes much difference now. Nathanial Evergood is serving his sentence out, evil and obscene as ever, and the case is long past and closed.

THE END



STRANGE EDEN

by

Philip K. Dick

**Johnson wanted to leave the verdant world
but Brent was bound he'd have a look around. He
did, and he found a reason to stay—unluckily . . .**

CAPTAIN Johnson was the first man out of the ship. He scanned the planet's great rolling forests, its miles of green that made your eyes ache. The sky overhead that was pure blue. Off beyond the trees lapped the edges of an ocean, about the same color as the sky, except for a bubbling surface of incredibly bright seaweed that darkened the blue almost to purple.

He had only four feet to go from the control board to the automatic hatch, and from there down the ramp to the soft black soil dug up by the jet blast and strewn everywhere, still steaming. He shaded his eyes against the golden sun, and then, after a moment, removed his glasses and polished them on his sleeve. He was a small man, thin and sallow-faced. He blinked nervously without his glasses and quickly fitted them back in place. He took a deep breath of the warm air, held it in his lungs, let it roll through his system, then reluctantly let it escape.

"Not bad," Brent rumbled, from the open hatch.

"If this place were closer to Terra there'd be empty beer cans and plastic plates strewn around.

The trees would be gone. There'd be old jet motors in the water. The beaches would stink to high heaven. Terran Development would have a couple of million little plastic houses set up everywhere."

Brent grunted indifferently. He jumped down, a huge barrel-chested man, sleeves rolled up, arms dark and hairy.

"What's that over there? Some kind of trail?"

Captain Johnson uneasily got out a star chart and studied it. "No ship ever reported in this area, before us. According to this chart the whole system's uninhabited."

Brent laughed. "Ever occur to you there might already be culture here? Non-Terran?"

Captain Johnson fingered his gun. He had never used it; this was the first time he had been assigned to an exploring survey outside the patrolled area of the galaxy. "Maybe we ought to take off. Actually, we don't have to map this place. We've mapped the three bigger planets, and this one isn't really required."

Brent strode across the damp ground, toward the trail. He squatted down and ran his hands over the broken grass. "Something comes

along here. There's a rut worn in the 'soil.' He gave a startled exclamation. "Footprints!"

"People?"

"Looks like some kind of animal. Large—maybe a big cat." Brent straightened up, his heavy face thoughtful. "Maybe we could get ourselves some fresh game. And if not, maybe a little sport."

Captain Johnson fluttered nervously. "How do we know what sort of defenses these animals have? Let's play it safe and stay in the ship. We can make our survey by air; the usual processes ought to be enough for a little place like this. I hate to stick around here." He shivered. "It gives me the creeps."

"The creeps?" Brent yawned and stretched, then started along the trail, toward the rolling miles of green forest. "I like it. A regular national park—complete with wildlife. You stay in the ship. I'll have a little fun."

BRENT moved cautiously through the dark woods, one hand on his gun. He was an old-time surveyor; he had wandered around plenty of remote places in his time, enough to know what he was doing. He halted from time to time, examining the trail and feeling the soil. The large prints continued and were joined by

others. A whole group of animals had come along this way, several species, all large. Probably flocking to a water source. A stream or pool of some kind.

He climbed a rise—then abruptly crouched. Ahead of him an animal was curled up on a flat stone, eyes shut, obviously sleeping. Brent moved around in a wide circle, carefully keeping his face to the animal. It was a cat, all right. But not the kind of cat he had ever seen before. Something like a lion—but larger. As large as a Terran rhino. Long tawny fur, great pads, a tail like a twisted spare-ropé. A few flies crawled over its flanks; muscles rippled and the flies darted off. Its mouth was slightly open; he could see gleaming white fangs that sparkled moistly in the sun. A vast pink tongue. It breathed heavily, slowly, snoring in its slumber.

Brent toyed with his r-pistol. As a sportsman he couldn't shoot it sleeping; he'd have to chuck a rock at it and wake it up. But as a man looking at a beast twice his weight, he was tempted to blast its heart out and lug the remains back to the ship. The head would look fine; the whole damn pelt would look fine. He could make up a nice story to go along with it—the thing dropping on him from a branch, or maybe springing out of a thicket, roaring and snarling.

He knelt down, rested his right elbow on his right knee, clasped the butt of the pistol with his left hand, closed one eye, and carefully aimed. He took a deep breath, steadied the gun, and released the safety catch.

As he began squeezing the trigger, two more of the great cats sauntered past him along the trail, nosed briefly at their sleeping relation, and continued on into the brush.

Feeling foolish, Brent lowered his gun. The two beasts had paid no attention to him. One had glanced his way slightly, but neither had paused or taken any notice. He got unsteadily to his feet, cold sweat breaking out on his forehead. Good God, if they had wanted they could have torn him apart. Crouching there with his back turned—

He'd have to be more careful. Not stop and stay in one place. Keep moving, or go back to the ship. No, he wouldn't go back to the ship. He still needed something to show pipsqueak Johnson. The little Captain was probably sitting nervously at the controls, wondering what had happened to him. Brent pushed carefully through the shrubs and regained the trail on the far side of the sleeping cat. He'd explore some more, find something worth bringing back, maybe camp the night in a sheltered spot. He

had a pack of hard rations, and in an emergency he could raise Johnson with his throat transmitter.

He came out on a flat meadow. Flowers grew everywhere, yellow and red and violet blossoms; he strode rapidly through them. The planet was virgin—still in its primitive stage. No humans had come here; as Johnson said, in awhile there'd be plastic plates and beer cans and rotting debris. Maybe he could take out a lease. Form a corporation and claim the whole damn thing. Then slowly subdivide, only to the best people. Promise them no commercialization; only the most exclusive homes. A garden retreat for wealthy Terrans who had plenty of leisure. Fishing and hunting; all the game they wanted. Completely tame, too. Unfamiliar with humans.

His scheme pleased him. As he came out of the meadow and plunged into dense trees, he considered how he'd raise the initial investment. He might have to cut others in on it; get somebody with plenty of loot to back him. They'd need good promotion and advertising; really push the thing good. Untouched planets were getting scarce; this might well be the last. If he missed this, it might be a long time before he had another chance to...

His thoughts died. His scheme

collapsed. Dull resentment choked him and he came to an abrupt halt.

Ahead the trail broadened. The trees were farther apart; bright sunlight sifted down into the silent darkness of the ferns and bushes and flowers. On a little rise was a building. A stone house, with steps, a front porch, solid white walls like marble. A garden grew around it. Windows. A path. Smaller buildings in the back. All neat and pretty—and extremely modern-looking. A small fountain sprinkled blue water into a basin. A few birds moved around the gravel paths, pecking and scratching.

The planet was inhabited.

BRENT approached warily. A wisp of gray smoke trailed out of the stone chimney. Behind the house were chicken pens, a cow-like thing dozing in the shade by its water trough. Other animals, some dog-like, and a group that might have been sheep. A regular little farm—but not like any farm he had seen. The buildings were of marble, or what looked like marble. And the animals were penned in by some kind of force-field. Everything was clean; in one corner a disposal tube sucked exhausted water and refuse into a half-buried tank.

He came to steps leading up to a back porch and after a moment

of thought, climbed them. He wasn't especially frightened. There was a serenity about the place, an orderly calm. It was hard to imagine any harm coming from it. He reached the door, hesitated, and then began looking for a knob.

There wasn't any knob. At his touch the door swung open. Feeling foolish, Brent entered. He found himself in a luxurious hall; recessed lights flicked on at the pressure of his boots on the thick carpets. Long glowing drapes hid the windows. Massive furniture—he peered into a room. Strange machines and objects. Pictures on the walls. Statues in the corners. He turned a corner and emerged into a large foyer. And still no one.

A huge animal, as large as a pony, moved out of a doorway, sniffed at him curiously, licked his wrist, and wandered off. He watched it go, heart in his mouth.

Tame. All the animals were tame. What kind of people had built this place? Panic stabbed at him. Maybe not people. Maybe some other race. Something alien, from beyond the galaxy. Maybe this was the frontier of an alien empire, some kind of advanced station.

While he was thinking about it, wondering if he should try to get out, run back to the ship, Vid the cruiser station at Orion IX, there was a faint rustle behind him. He

turned quickly, hand on his gun.

"Who—" he gasped. And froze.

A girl stood there, face calm, eyes large and dark, a cloudy black. She was tall, almost as tall as he, a little under six feet. Cascades of black hair spilled down her shoulders, down to her waist. She wore a glistening robe of some oddly-metallic material; countless facets glittered and sparkled and reflected the overhead lights. Her lips were deep red and full. Her arms were folded beneath her breasts; they stirred faintly as she breathed. Beside her stood the pony-like animal that had nosed him and gone on.

"Welcome, Mr. Brent," the girl said. She smiled at him; he caught a flash of her tiny white teeth. Her voice was gentle and lilting, remarkably pure. Abruptly she turned; her robe fluttered behind her as she passed through the doorway and into the room beyond. "Come along. I've been expecting you."

BRENT entered cautiously. A man stood at the end of the long table, watching him with obvious dislike. He was huge, over six feet, broad shoulders and arms that rippled as he buttoned his cloak and moved toward the door. The table was covered with dishes and bowls of food; robot servants were clearing away the things si-

lently. Obviously, the girl and man had been eating.

"This is my brother," the girl said, indicating the dark-faced giant. He bowed slightly to Brent, exchanged a few words with the girl in an unfamiliar, liquid tongue, and then abruptly departed. His footsteps died down the hall.

"I'm sorry," Brent muttered. "I didn't mean to bust in here and break up anything."

"Don't worry. He was going. Actually, we don't get along very well." The girl drew the drapes aside to reveal a wide window overlooking the forest. "You can watch him go. His ship is parked out there. See it?"

It took a moment for Brent to make out the ship. It blended into the scenery perfectly. Only when it abruptly shot upward at a ninety-degree angle did he realize it had been there all the time. He had walked within yards of it.

"He's quite a person," the girl said, letting the drapes fall back in place. "Are you hungry? Here, sit down and eat with me. Now that Aeetes is gone and I'm all alone."

Brent sat down cautiously. The food looked good. The dishes were some kind of semi-transparent metal. A robot set places in front of him, knives, forks, spoons, then waited to be instructed. The girl gave it orders in her strange liq-

uid tongue. It promptly served Brent and retired.

He and the girl were alone. Brent began to eat greedily, the food was delicious. He tore the wings from a chicken-like fowl and gnawed at it expertly. He gulped down a tumbler of dark red wine, wiped his mouth on his sleeve, and attacked a bowl of ripe fruit. Vegetables, spiced meats, seafood, warm bread—he gobbled down everything with pleasure. The girl ate a few dainty bites; she watched him curiously, until finally he was finished and had pushed his empty dishes away.

"Where's your Captain?" she asked. "Didn't he come?"

"Johnson? He's back at the ship." Brent belched noisily. "How come you speak Terran? It's not your natural language. And how did you know there's somebody with me?"

The girl laughed, a tinkling musical peal. She wiped her slim hands on a napkin and drank from a dark red glass. "We watched you on the scanner. We were curious. This is the first time one of your ships has penetrated this far. We wondered what your intentions were."

"You didn't learn Terran by watching our ship on a scanner."

"No. I learned your language from people of your race. That was a long time ago. I've spoken your

language as long as I can remember."

Brent was baffled. "But you said our ship was the first to come here."

The girl laughed. "True. But we've often visited your little world. We know all about it. It's a stop-over point when we're traveling in that direction. I've been there many times—not for awhile, but in the old days when I traveled more."

A strange chill settled over Brent. "Who are you people? Where are you from?"

"I don't know where we're from originally," the girl answered. "Our civilization is all over the universe, by now. It probably started from one place, back in legendary times. By now it's practically everywhere."

"Why haven't we run into your people before?"

The girl smiled and continued eating. "Didn't you hear what I said? You *have* met us. Often. We've even brought Terrans here. I remember one time very clearly, a few thousand years ago—"

"How long are your years?" Brent demanded.

"We don't have years." The girl's dark eyes bored into him, luminous, with amusement. "I mean *Terran* years."

IT took a minute for the full impact to hit him. "Thou-

sand years," he murmured. "You've been alive a thousand years?"

"Eleven thousand," the girl answered simply. She nodded, and a robot cleared away the dishes. She leaned back in her chair, yawned, stretched like a small, lithe cat, then abruptly sprang to her feet. "Come on. We've finished eating. I'll show you my house."

Brent scrambled up and hurried after her, his confidence shattered. "You're immortal, aren't you?" He moved between her and the door, breathing rapidly, heavy face flushed. "You don't age."

"Age? No, of course not."

Brent managed to find words. "You're gods."

The girl smiled up at him, dark eyes, flashing merrily. "Not really. You have just about everything we have—almost as much knowledge, science, culture. Eventually you'll catch up with us. We're an old race. Millions of years ago our scientists succeeded in slowing down the processes of decay; since then we've ceased to die."

"Then your race stays constant. None die, none are born."

The girl pushed past him, through the doorway and down the hall. "Oh, people are born all the time. Our race grows and expands." She halted at a doorway. "We haven't given up any of our pleasures." She eyed Brent thoughtfully, his shoul-

ders, arms, his dark hair, heavy face. "We're about like you, except that we're eternal. You'll probably solve that, too, sometime."

"You've moved among us?" Brent demanded. He was beginning to understand. "Then all those old religions and myths were true. Gods. Miracles. You've had contact with us, given us things. Done things for us." He followed her wonderingly into the room.

"Yes. I suppose we've done things for you. As we pass through." The girl moved about the room, letting down the massive drapes. Soft darkness fell over the couches and bookcases and statues. "Do you play chess?"

"CHESS?"

"It's our national game. We introduced it to some of your Brahmin ancestors." Disappointment showed on her sharp little face. "You don't play? Too bad. What do you do? What about your companion? He looked as if his intellectual capacity was greater than yours. Does he play chess? Maybe you ought to go back and get him."

"I don't think so," Brent said. He moved toward her. "As far as I know he doesn't do anything." He reached out and caught her by the arm. The girl pulled away, astonished. Brent gathered her up in his big arms and drew her tight against him. "I don't think we need him,"

he said.

HE kissed her on the mouth. Her red lips were warm and sweet; she gasped and fought wildly. He could feel her slim body struggling against him. A cloud of fragrant scent billowed from her dark hair. She tore at him with her sharp nails, breasts heaving violently. He let go and she slid away, wary and bright-eyed breathing quickly, body tense, drawing her luminous robe about her.

"I could kill you," she whispered. She touched her jeweled belt. "You don't understand, do you?"

Brent came forward. "You probably can. But I bet you won't."

She backed away from him. "Don't be a fool." Her red lips twisted and a smile flickered briefly. "You're brave. But not very smart. Still, that's not such a bad combination in a man. Stupid and brave." Agilely, she avoided his grasp and slipped out of his reach. "You're in good physical shape, too. How do you manage it aboard that little ship?"

"Quarterly fitness courses," Brent answered. He moved between her and the door. "You must get pretty damn bored here, all by yourself. After the first few thousand years it must get trying."

"I find things to do," she said. "Don't come any closer to me. As

much as I admire your daring, it's only fair to warn you that—"

Brent grabbed her. She fought wildly; he pinned her hands together behind her back with one paw, arched her body taut, and kissed her half-parted lips. She sank her tiny white teeth into him; he grunted and jerked away. She was laughing, black eyes dancing, as she struggled. Her breath came rapidly, cheeks flushed, half-covered breasts quivering, body twisting like a trapped animal. He caught her around the waist and grabbed her up in his arms.

A wave of force hit him.

He dropped her; she landed easily on her feet and danced back. Brent was doubled up, face gray with agony. Cold sweat stood out on his neck and hands. He sank down on a couch and closed his eyes, muscles knotted, body writhing with pain.

"Sorry," the girl said. She moved around the room, ignoring him. "It's your own fault—I told you to be careful. Maybe you better get out of here. Back to your little ship. I don't want anything to happen to you. It's against our policy to kill Terrans."

"What—was that?"

"Nothing much. A form of repulsion, I suppose. This belt was constructed on one of our industrial planets; it protects me but I

don't know the operational principle."

Brent managed to get to his feet. You're pretty tough for a little girl."

"A little girl? I'm pretty *old* for a little girl. I was old before you were born. I was old before your people had rocket-ships. I was old before you knew how to weave clothing and write your thoughts down with symbols. I've watched your race advance and fall back into barbarism and advance again. Endless nations and empires. I was alive when the Egyptians first began spreading out into Asia Minor. I saw the city builders of the Tigris Valley begin putting up their brick houses. I saw the Assyrian war chariots roll out to fight. I and my friends visited Greece and Rome and Minoa and Lyddia and the great kingdoms of the red-skinned Indians. We were gods to the ancients, saints to the Christians. We come and go. As your people advanced we came less often. We have other way-stations; yours isn't the only stop-over point."

BRENT was silent. Color was beginning to come back to his face. The girl had thrown herself down on one of the soft couches; she leaned back against a pillow and gazed up at him calmly, one arm outstretched, the other

across her lap. His long legs were tucked under her, tiny feet pressed together. She looked like a small, contented kitten resting after a game. It was hard for him to believe what she had told him: But his body still ached; he had felt a minute portion of her power-field, and it had almost killed him. That was something to think about.

"Well?" the girl asked, presently. "What are you going to do? It's getting late. I think you ought to go back to your ship. Your Captain will be wondering what happened to you."

Brent moved over to the window and drew aside the heavy drapes. The sun had set. Darkness was settling over the forests outside. Stars had already begun to come out, tiny dots of white in the thickening violet. A distant line of hills jutted up black and ominous.

"I can contact him," Brent said. He tapped his neck. "In case of emergency. Tell him I'm all right."

"*Are you all right?* You shouldn't be here. You think you know what you're doing. You think you can handle me." She raised herself up slightly and tossed her black hair back over her shoulders. "I can see what's going on in your mind. I'm so much like a girl you had an affair with, a young brunette you used to wrap around your finger—and boast about to your compa-

nions."

Brent flushed. "You're a telepath. You should have told me."

"A partial telepath. All I need. Toss me your cigarettes. We don't have such things."

Brent fumbled in his pocket, got his pack out and tossed it to her. She lit up and inhaled gratefully. A cloud of gray smoke drifted around her; it mixed with the darkening shadows of the room. The corners dissolved into gloom. She became an indistinct shape, curled up on the couch, the glowing cigarette between her dark red lips.

"I'm not afraid," Brent said.

"No, you're not. You're not a coward. If you were as smart as you are brave—but then I guess you wouldn't be brave. I admire your bravery, stupid as it is. Man has a lot of courage. Even though it's based on ignorance, it's impressive." After a moment, she said, "Come over here and sit with me."

"**W**HAT do I have to be worried about?" Brent asked after awhile. "If you don't turn on that damn belt, I'll be all right."

In the darkness, the girl stirred. "There's more than that." She sat up a little, arranged her hair, pulled a pillow behind her head. "You see, we're of totally different races. My race is millions of years advanced over yours. Contact with

us—close contact—is lethal. Not to us, of course. To you. You can't be with me and remain a human being."

"What do you mean?"

"You'll undergo changes. Evolutionary changes. There's pull which we exert. We're fully charged; close contact with us will exert influence on the cells of your body. Those animals outside. They've evolved slightly; they're no longer wild beasts. They're able to understand simple commands and follow basic routines. As yet, they have no language. With such low animals it's a long process; and my contact with them hasn't really been close. But with you—"

"I see."

"We're not supposed to let humans near us. Aeetes cleared out of here. I'm too lazy to go—I don't especially care. I'm not mature and responsible, I suppose." She smiled slightly. "And my kind of close contact is a little closer than most."

Brent could barely make out her slim form in the darkness. She lay back against the pillows, lips parted, arms folded beneath her breasts, head tilted back. She was lovely. The most beautiful woman he had ever seen. After a moment he leaned toward her. This time she didn't move away. He kissed her gently. Then he put his arms around her slender body and drew her tight against him. Her robe rustled. Her

soft hair brushed against him, warm and fragrant.

"It's worth it," he said.

"You're sure? You can't turn back, once it's begun. Do you understand? You won't be human any more. You'll have evolved. Along lines your race will take millions of years from now. You'll be an outcast, a forerunner of things to come. Without companions."

"I'll stay." He caressed her cheek her hair, her neck. He could feel the blood pulsing beneath the downy skin; a rapid pounding in the hollow of her throat. She was breathing rapidly; her breasts rose and fell against him. "If you'll let me."

"Yes," she murmured. "I'll let you. If it's what you really want. But don't blame me." A half-sad, half mischievous smile flitted across her sharp features; her dark eyes sparkled. "Promise you won't blame me? It's happened before—I hate people to reproach me. I always say never again. No matter what."

"Has it happened before?"

The girl laughed, softly and close to his ear. She kissed him warmly and hugged him hard against her. "In eleven thousand years," she whispered, "it's happened quite often."

CAPTAIN Johnson had a bad night. He tried to raise

Brent on the emergency com, but there was no response. Only faint static and a distant echo of a vid program from Orion X. Jazz music and sugary commercials.

The sounds of civilization reminded him that they had to keep moving. Twenty-four hours was all the time allotted to this planet, smallest of its system.

"Damn," he muttered. He fixed a pot of coffee and checked his wristwatch. Then he got out of the ship and wandered around in the early-morning sunlight. The sun was beginning to come up. The air turned from dark violet to gray. It was cold as hell. He shivered and stamped his feet and watched some small bird-like things fly down to peck around the bushes.

He was just beginning to think of notifying Orion XI when he saw her.

She walked quickly toward the ship. Tall and slim in a heavy fur jacket, her arms buried in the deep pelt, Johnson stood rooted to the spot, dumbfounded. He was too astonished even to touch his gun. His mouth fell open as the girl halted a little way off, tossed her dark hair back, blew a cloud of silvery breath at him and then said, "I'm sorry you had a bad night. It's my fault. I should have sent him right back."

Captain Johnson's mouth opened

and shut. "Who are you?" he managed finally. Fear seized him. "Where's Brent? What happened?"

"He'll be along." She turned back toward the forest and made a sign. "I think you'd better leave, now. He wants to stay here and that is best—for he's changed. He'll be happy in my forest with the other men. It's strange how all you humans come out exactly alike. Your race is moving along an unusual path. It might be worth our while to study you, sometime. It must have something to do with your low esthetic plateau. You seem to have an innate vulgarity, which eventually will dominate you."

From out of the woods came a strange shape. For a moment Captain Johnson thought his eyes were playing tricks on him. He blinked, squinted, then grunted in disbelief. Here, on this remote planet—but there was no mistake. It was def-

initely an immense cat-like beast that came slowly and miserably out of the woods after the girl.

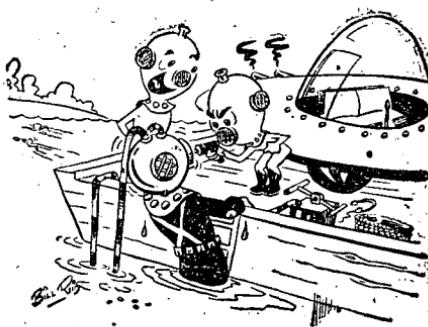
The girl moved away, then halted to wave to the beast, who whined wretchedly around the ship.

Johnson stared at the animal and felt a sudden fear. Instinctively he knew that Brent was not coming back to the ship. Something had happened on this strange planet—that girl . . .

Johnson slammed the airlock shut and hurried to the control panel. He had to get back to the nearest base and make a report. This called for an elaborate investigation.

As the rockets blasted Johnson glanced through the viewplate. He saw the animal shaking a huge paw futilely in the air after the departing ship.

Johnson shuddered. That was too much like a man's angry gesture . . .



"Take it easy—can't you see this boy's one of us?"

* Transoceanic TV? *

THE TV micro-wave link between London and Paris is only a harbinger of what's to come. So successful was this experimental telecast that already the engineers are talking of a trans-Atlantic relay system!

A number of possibilities suggest themselves. Since micro-waves which carry TV are limited to line-of-sight distances, there must be a relay station every 120 miles or so. This can be accomplished in a number of ways, English engineers insist. First, such stations could be erected in a chain such as stretches

across the United States, over Canada, into the Arctic regions and then down through Sweden into Europe and England.

Finally there is the possibility of using the Moon as a reflector of high-powered TV signals. The construction of a space station would be the perfect solution since it could receive and re-broadcast to any point on Earth continuously!

Whatever the final solution, there is simply no questioning that world-wide TV is coming and the time is not far off—another score for the s-f prognosticators . . .



"Certainly kept his promise to yell when he got to the top, didn't he?"

It was purely by accident that he passed Earth in his galactic travels. But it became a matter of design that he land there, because—

The Vegans Were Curious

by

Winston Marks

THE little sun was almost a light-year out of his way, and he could have made it on to Sirius without stopping. But the thirst within him was strong. The delicious, yellow sun with its rich corona and tiny, tantalizing streamers was too tempting to pass up. Even before its gravitic currents were strong enough to be of utility, he was decided. He would pause. He would gorge himself. He would drink until he was blue-white.

The thought was the first pleasant, sensuous one he had allowed himself on the long journey. In his haste to indulge, he ignored the nine planets which normally would have attracted at least a curious glance from him. Not until he veered physically to avoid the third planet from the sun was he distracted from his goal.

A bevy of the clumsy little spaceships from distant Vega were swarming just outside the planet's

turgid atmosphere. As he approached, one of the Vegans noted his presence and hailed him:

"Greetings, Sirian! Stop a bit and give us your worthy opinion."

Although the message took but half a micro-second, the Sirian was almost past the planet's pale satellite before he could repolarize his photons and reverse his direction. Being the haughty creatures they were, the Vegan's invitation was both unusual and provocative.

The Sirian noted, as he returned, that the flight of one-man-disks seemed gathered about a mushroom-shaped cloud of opaque, gaseous matter, entirely cold except for a modest radio-activity.

When he shot out an open query, the Vegan answered, "They did it! Those incredible little organic creatures down on the surface."

"Creatures? You mean there is an intelligent *organic* life-form on



this planet?" the Sirian asked somewhat incredulously. He had passed this system a hundred times without suspecting such a thing.

"Well, not exactly intelligent in a galactic sense, but likely you'll agree that the principles of fission and fusion are somewhat remarkable to find mastered by a planet-bound life-form as primitive as these entities. They are ordinary, liquid-and-solid, carbon-ring, ferro-protein, bi-symmetrical bipeds — you know, the kind you find scattered about on these oxygen-rich planets. But imagine! Nuclear manipulation!"

The Sirian found the paradox both curious and amusing. Never, to his knowledge, had solid-matter life-forms advanced beyond a

rudimentary use of chemical combustion reactions, and even those who did master fire more often worshipped it than made a sensible use of it.

"Interesting! Interesting, indeed. I think I will have a look."

"We were hoping you would," the Vegan replied. "We've done all the investigating we dare."

"How is that?"

"They've spotted us, we think. Every time we come close to the surface they dispatch little gas-expulsion vessels to chase us."

"Why don't you simply land and establish communications?"

"With our limitations we're not that curious. They're a violent, vicious, suspicious lot — some two or three billion of them. And they

have some nasty little weapons at their disposal. Their nature seems to be to hate what they don't understand. Shoot first and question later."

"Thanks for the warning —"

"Not that you need it. With your metamorphic abilities you can easily —"

"Of course. Now, on what question did you seek my opinion?"

The Vegan was slow in answering, as if the question were still hazy in his mind. Then he said, "Our observations seem to indicate that these creatures are divided into two general categories, but the only distinctions we can detect are so superficial as to be ridiculous. One is in the manner of attiring themselves, and the other —" He paused as if reluctant.

"Yes, yes?"

"Well, this may seem fatuous, but all reproduction appears to be confined to *one of the types*."

"That would be unique," the Sirian granted.

"But if this is true, there must be more important differences between the two types," the Vegan went on. "Basic differences, one would expect."

"Then your question to me is, what are these differences, if any?"

"Precisely."

How very typical of the superficial Vegan mentality, the Sirian

thought to himself. Worrying themselves over some minor biological detail, when the obviously fascinating mystery lay in the creatures' ability to cause nuclear fission and fusion. These thoughts he screened from them, for the Vegans are quick to take offense, a rather childish lot, for all of their advanced culture.

"Very well, I will look into that, too," he agreed and with appropriate, interstellar amenities, took his leave Earthward.

HE looked for a concentration of "people," and he found one, scattered along two miles of sandy beach adjacent to a nervously lapping body of liquid which was aqueous, saline and incredibly full of lower life-forms.

He hovered over the heads of the bathers at an altitude of less than fifty feet, his person distributed almost the whole two miles of beach. The sun being at its zenith, no one looked directly up, and if they had they would have seen only a faint, golden glow.

He scanned the general atomic-molecular-cellular-structural patterns of the entities, inventoried his own energy content, decided he could just about make it, and set about carefully condensing his photons. As the swirling energy came to a focus, people still did

not stare up, but hundreds sought the shade of their beach umbrellas, donned their sun-glasses or decided they'd had enough for today.

Presently, he had himself organized into a ball of evanescence two-hundred yards in diameter, all ready for the final compression. This was the most tedious metamorphosis he had ever attempted — all those nerve-endings, hair follicles, pores, sweat-glands!

He found a bare patch of sand, some fifteen feet across, just vacated by a family of fourteen. In a rush he sought to complete the transformation before the crowd expanded into it.

But wait! There was one decision more. He had, indeed, discovered that there were two kinds of "humans" on the beach. The physiological differences seemed very minor, and the deciding factor was that one category wore attire only in one place, whereas the other covered its body at two points, thus excluding a bit more of the delicious radiance of the golden sun.

He decided to be a male.

"Well, he's got his nerve!"

"I should say so! Looka the skinny little runt, right in the middle a that nice empty spot."

"Tell 'im to move over Fred. We saw it first."

The Sirian smiled at the palpable

lie. "Please share it with me," he said pleasantly, scooting over to one side.

His move was too precipitous. A long-legged blonde creature, pink and supine, hunched to a sitting position. "Watch it, junior. You kicked sand all over my sun-tan lotion."

"Oh, sorry!" He sent a super-gentle wave of vibratory energy out to wipe off the offending grains of silica.

"Yipe! Why you fresh punk!" Then the blonde discovered that the fresh punk was still six feet away. She turned to her henna-haired companion: "Ye Gods, what a sensation! Goose flesh, yet." She rubbed on some more lotion, turned over on her side and dug her blue-clad hip into the sand under her blanket.

The Sirian studied the shapely back and buttocks, for which, in his brand new orientation, he seemed to possess a peculiar aesthetic appreciation. The intruder called Fred, in the act of spreading his blanket, noticed his stare and laughed. "She's not for the likes of you, Super-mouse."

The idiomatic allusion escaped the Sirian. He had thought he had the language pattern mastered in his initial survey, but the item, Super-mouse, apparently had a remote significance.

INSTINCTIVELY, he lashed out a sub-etheric feeler to probe the man's brain — and just as instantly retrieved it. To his annoyance he discovered an extremely sensitive and complex net-work of brain-waves encasing and protecting the frontal lobes of the man's thinking apparatus. Yes, his "subconscious" mind was easily available, and therein was stored a fabulous assortment of inconsequential, intellectual debris, including a knowledge of the language, but to sift and sort that disorganized nest for one silly term seemed like more trouble than asking what it meant.

So he did.

Fred replied, "You don't know Super-mouse? You should go to the movies. Anyhow, I just meant you could use some meat on your bones, fellow."

He turned and dropped beside the brown-haired female beside him. "What a character!" he told her.

The Sirian looked down at himself and understood the disparaging tone. This point in his intergalactic journey had found his energy store quite depleted, and the best he could "condense" into was a rather grotesque, five-foot caricature of the specimens surrounding him.

His bony feet, knees and elbows wore the minimum allowable thick-

nesses of flesh, but what seemed to amuse the neighbors most was his very pale skin. This was by design rather than accident. Why pigment his skin to exclude the intoxicating solar energy that was flooding his pitiful earthform? If he had dared, he would have changed his translucent skin to complete transparency, but that would have been too noticeable.

He became aware, also, that people were staring at the region of his groin. Before he had time to probe his mistake of attire, however, another couple moved into the shrinking bare spot of sand and challenged his right to three whole square yards.

"Consolidate, will ya, mister?" The male was huge, hairy and small-eyed. The female was the opposite. The only visible hair was a rippling torrent of yellow gold that fell down her back in a graceful sweep. She was tiny, tanned — and — the Sirian fumbled with his new vocabulary — terrific!

Again that peculiar sensation of pleasure sent bubbles of pressure into his throbbing temple veins. He had a name for the weird desire it inspired. *Rut*, it was called, but he had no experience from which to assess it.

Unfortunately, the man before him assessed his emotion swiftly and accurately. "Whatcha gapin'

at, squirt?"

"Why, uh, your female —" The man's face darkened, and the Sirian rushed on searching for a more propitious term, "I mean, your broad, wife, sweetheart, girl, doll, honey —"

Hampered by the sluggish mén-tal equipment in this human for-mat, he was unable to select a semi-antically acceptable synonym, so he blurted all he could think of.

"Why, you —"

He felt himself hoisted rudely by one thin arm, and suddenly the large, dark face was jammed into his own. "Whadda ya mean, layin' there in a broad's Bikini bathin' suit and callin' my broad a broad? What kind of a queer are you, anyhow?"

"Oh, I'm very," the Sirian man-aged to strangle out.

"Very what?"

"What you said. Queer." He had no desire to offend these people, but their expression indicated that his progress was poor.

"Are you trying to be insult-ing?" The man asked the question and seemed to arrive at an affirma-tive answer simultaneously. He balled a fist and pumped it soli-dly into the Sirian's midriff.

ANTICIPATING pain from the violent gesture, he blocked off the nerve endings, reinforced his

stomach muscles at the expense of some bony tissue, and leaned into the blow. Transmuting the kinetic energy into assimilable light, the Sirian enjoyed the tiny tweak of power.

The big man jerked back his wrist and stared at it. "Like a rock, yet. Huh! Wipe that smirk off, Mac."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Still snotty, huh?" The big fellow slammed two lefts and two rights to the body with no more effect.

The gorgeous blonde said, "Oh stop, Tony. He's one of these whaddayacallems — masochists. He likes to get slugged. Now stop it, I tell you, or the cops will —"

But Tony was unstoppable. In-furiated, he aimed a round-house right at the Sirian's chin, and that individual, fearing for the struc-tural inadequacies of his neck, ducked.

Tony launched himself at full length in the direction of the blue-buttocked blonde but made it only as far as her upright bottle of sun-tan lotion. He crashed to the sand with considerable force. Twisting his neck to save his nose from the sand, Tony brought his temple in deadly line with the little rigid bottle.

From the solid jam of humanity came voices. "Wow, did you see

the little guy counter-punch him? Just like lightning."

"Naw, The big guy stumbled. He hit his head."

"On the bottle."

"The little guy? Yeah, he jabbed the big guy with the bottle. Dirty fighting, I call it, even if he is littler."

"Here they come. Hey shorty, here come the cops. Better melt away quick."

Things were out of focus for the Sirian. He lost the opportunity to "melt away" and was shortly in custody.

The hearing and, later, the trial was so farcical as to be fascinating. He hadn't intended an extensive study of the mores and morals of this primitive culture, but the Sirian couldn't resist the intriguing developments that piled one on top the other.

In the so-called court of law, not a single witness to the actual "murder" appeared, except the terrific blonde. Yet a sizable parade of strangers did appear to identify the accused and testify to his cold-blooded act of violence.

It developed that:

A. Tony was a gangster-politician of some note.

B. Tony had mortal enemies in the underworld.

C. Tony had been deliberately baited.

D. The Sirian had carefully jabbed him in the temple.

C. The crime was premeditated.

D. The Sirian was a well-known judo-killer named Mike Sledge, of the opposing underworld. (This last from the D. A.'s office).

The verdict was: GUILTY.

The penalty: DEATH.

As a last wish, the convicted man was granted the privilege of immediate execution rather than enduring the usual delay.

This last threw the death-house into quite an uproar, but the Sirian had no intention of languishing for weeks in confinement.

Exactly at midnight, he was led to the death chamber, sleeves and pant-legs slit, head shaved and belly full of fried chicken to which he had taken a fancy.

There was the priest, the press and the other witnesses. The chair looked ugly and uncomfortable, but the crackling jolts of electricity were worth it. They sent trickles of pure ecstasy through the Sirian's power-thirsty being. But they were only trickles, and comparatively short. They tried him at 30,000 volts, 40,000, 50,000. But then he deliberately lowered his body resistance in order to drink up more amperage and blew all the fuses.

They held him twenty-four hours

out of pure curiosity while the doctors had a field day. But the press championed his cause, and he was set free.

THE blonde was waiting in a black Cadillac. The blonde had just collected Tony's insurance and was now obsessed with the thought that any guy who could soak up electricity like that must have shocking possibilities.

The Syrian settled back in the leopard-skin upholstery and sighed. As the vehicle moved off into the darkness, a soft, perfumed arm slipped around his neck. "My poor, poor Mike," the voice came like the purr of a mink. "I'll bet he doesn't feel well. Please don't be angry with little me for testifying against you."

"Don't mention it," *Mike* replied. "And I feel very well, thank you." This was the truth. With nearly a million watts of pure 60-cycle A. C. under his belt, the Syrian had been able to expand his puny physique slightly. At least his red blood count was up to normal now.

"Only one thing," he remarked, "I am tired of being pestered with reporters. Where could we go to escape them?"

"Oh dear, that is a problem." She looked out the rear window. "They are following, of course.

And they'll have my pent-house staked out like sharks around a desert island."

"That reminds me," *Mike* said. "This Bikini I was wearing at the time of the crime —"

She giggled. "You did look silly."

"Well, what I want to know is, why did they call my trunks by such a name? My understanding is that Bikini is the name of an island in the Pacific Ocean."

"Yeah, I guess. Where they popped the H-bomb."

"H-bomb?" At last the hazy double meaning became clear to him. His subconscious survey of many human minds had found nuclear energy mixed up with females' scanty bathing attire, and the connection had evaded him until this moment. "Could we see one if we went there?"

"One what?"

"An H-bomb, of course."

"Oh, naturally. The government would just love to show us how they shoot off a H-bomb," she said. He missed the sarcasm entirely. "Matter of fact, they're testing out there again this week. Why don't you call up the president."

"That won't be necessary," he said seriously. In the space of eight micro-seconds, he volatilized, visited the Pentagon, stripped the exact

location of the next nuclear bomb detonation from an agonized general, and returned to the Cadillac. The blonde, of course, was unaware of his brief absence.

"Just as I thought," he told her. "It's a nice, secluded spot where you and I can be all alone for a little while. And I can poke around and see what makes these bombs tick."

"Fine, fine," she purred in his ear. "Let's go."

She thought he was kidding.

It was an hour before dawn on the atoll when he re-materialized the Cadillac, blonde and all, on the coral beach. Only the chauffeur had been left behind.

"What's that sound," she cried a little startled.

"Just the surf."

"Be darned! I don't remember telling Smith to drive us to — oh well, it's quiet, isn't it honey?"

The Sirian sent out a probe and located the tower with the huge nuclear device suspended below it. He was about to close in and focus on the construction and composition when the voice in his ear hissed intimately, "Mike, darling, where are you?"

"Me? Why, I'm right here."

"Hadda feeling you were miles away."

"Not at all. Just about twenty-five yards is all. It's located right

over there."

"What's located where?"

"The hydrogen bomb. Just over that first hump. You can see the tower."

"Don't be silly," she said giggling. "It's jet black out there. Real dark, and private, and Smith's gone off somewhere. We're all alone, darling. Just like you wanted."

AND now the Sirian, alias Mike Sledge, learned that there were other than visual methods of aesthetic appreciation. Hundred-dollar-a-dram perfume assailed his olfactory tissues from her warm body, turning certain minuscule glands within him into busy chemical factories.

Her finger-tips trailed over his shaved head, and he almost threw out a nerve block before he realized that the sensation was psycho-physical rather than electronic.

"Show me!" she whispered.

"Show you what?"

"How you did it. How you fought back all that juice. All that terrible electricity!"

"I didn't fight it. I just soaked it up."

"Soaked it —?" She gasped, and the passion was vibrant in her voice. "It's — it's all in you? Now?"

"Of course."

"Oh, my darling! Kiss me!"

The custom of kissing, was known to the Sirian, but known only on the academic level until this moment. Her lips were moist and full and demanding.

"Fantastic!" she said in a flat voice.

"Well, thank you," he said, sitting back with a ridiculous feeling of smug pleasure at her response.

"Fantastic how a guy can sweat out the hot-seat and kiss like a highschool sophomore." Her tone of voice led him to delve into the idiomatic roots of her words, and he came away deflated.

"I, ah, let's try again," he suggested.

He had been holding himself slightly aloof from the sensation thresh-holds of this primitive body, but now he let himself sink deeply into the full neuro-muscular morsass of feelings and emotions. The effect was astonishing, confusing, overwhelming.

Tearing his lips loose he demanded, "What is it?"

"What's what?"

"This — this, whatever we're doing?" Somehow they had become oddly entwined, and his tactile sensations were blossoming like a nova.

Her head slipped past his face, and her sharp teeth nibbled at his ear. "You *are* a strange one, honey.

It's kissing. It's love-making. And incidentally, you're doing all right now. Kiss me again, honey. All those volts! Make me feel it. Make me —"

He piled his hastily contrived, but entirely functional, orbicular organs upon hers so hard that their teeth clashed. The nova inside him burgeoned and whirled as though feeding on some hidden hydrogen-helium infusion. Minutes flashed into eternity. Then an hour, and the crazy crescendo of emotion was still mounting between them.

Then at the first streak of dawn, his bony arms crushed her to him in a clasp that sent the universe exploding in one solid bath of pure, nutrient energy.

His pores opened, and he drank — for one micro-second, two microseconds, three, four, five — and suddenly he found himself reeling into the stratosphere, up, up, out of the cloying air into the comfortable, naked void, trailing neutrons, extravagantly, strewing protons, hiccupping electrons. At last he stabilized his mass-energy ratio, drew in his peripheral photons and shimmered to a trembling focus.

INSTANTLY he was surrounded with Vegans, chittering with curiosity, dipping and oscillating their silvery disks in the raw, unfiltered light of the yellow sun.

"Did you learn anything?"

"A little."

"Did you — metamorphose as a native?" they asked expectantly.

"I did," he admitted reluctantly.

"Well, tell us about it. All about it!"

"I was accused of murder, tried in a court of law, convicted, sentenced to death and executed."

"Irrelevant," a Vegan snapped. "Tell us about the two categories. Did you find out about that?"

"Yes."

"Is there a significant difference?"

"They call it sex," the Sirian temporized.

"Come, come; delete the alien terminology."

"There are men — and there are women," he said, striving to gather his thoughts and his dignity about him. It was no use. The patina of his vastly expanded corona was a dead, pink giveaway. "Just one minute ago," he confessed, "I was a man, juxtaposed with a woman, exploring the differences between the categories."

"Were the differences important? Significant?"

"To the humans, *very!*" He tried to sound detached.

The Vegans wouldn't be put aside. "Naturally they'd be important to the primitives, but how about to you? Subjectively?"

"A few minor anatomical differences, that's all. Added up to very little." His words were belied by tiny streaks of badly polarized photons.

The Vegans radiated ripples of disappointment, losing what little patience they possessed. One blurted out angrily, "Very well, if you can't explain sex, what about the nuclear reactions? You should be an expert on that subject. You appeared to ascend from the very island where they just fused a lithium-hydride bomb."

"Bomb?" the Sirian said dazedly. "What bomb?"

The Vegans circled him and vibrated with cynical laughter. "So this mysterious sex had no impact upon you?"

The void was filled with their noxious, ill-mannered jeers, but the Sirian was still too disorganized to feel very embarrassed.

"What happened to the female — the *woman* you said you were with — what happened to her?" asked a Vegan.

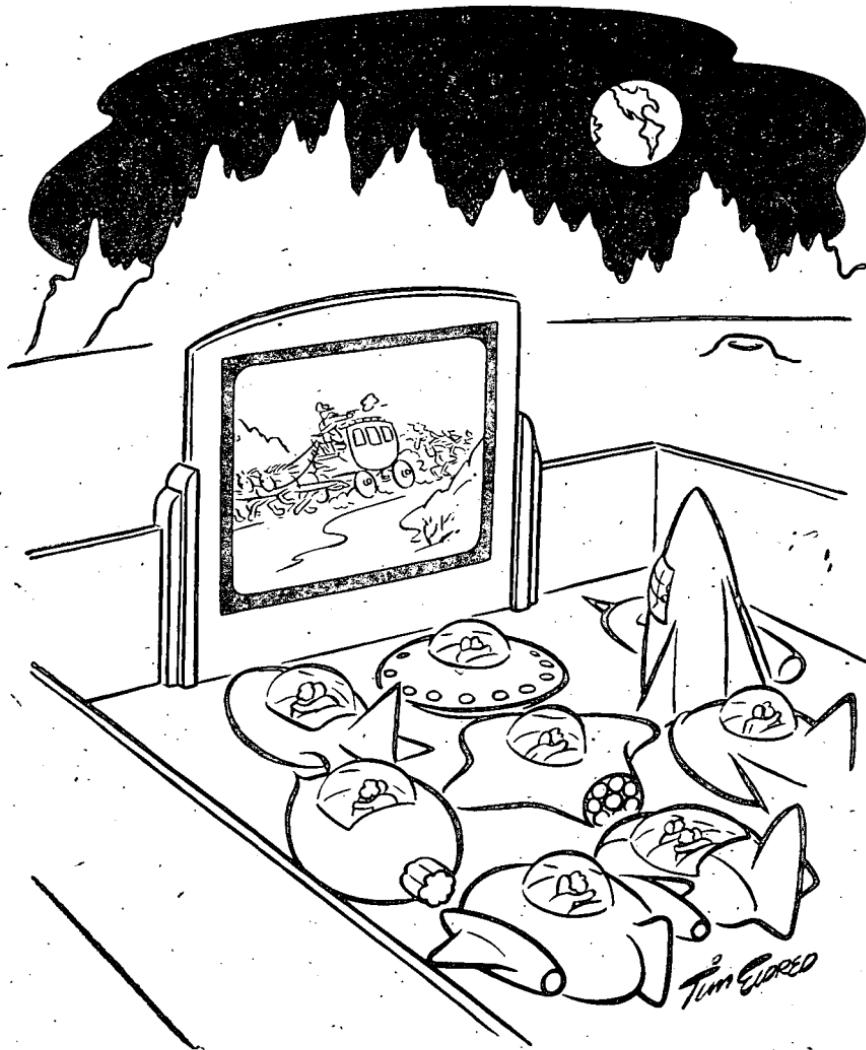
The Sirian involuntarily phased his photons into a mental image of the voluptuous, golden-haired native girl, but without the primitive earth-body with which to react endocrinologically, the vision failed to renew the corporcular palpitations which were already damping out.

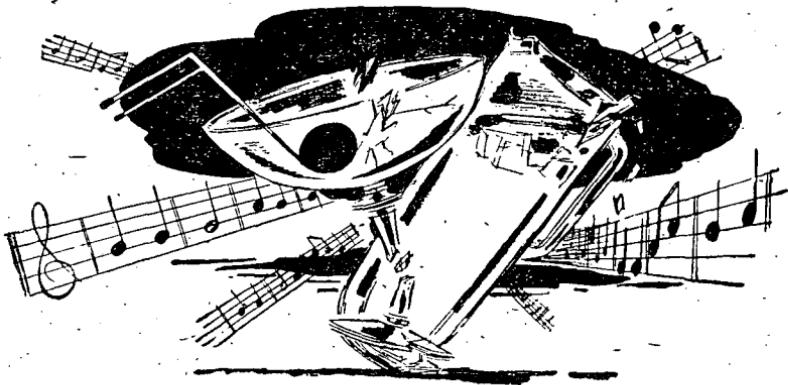
THE VEGANS WERE CURIOUS

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"The woman?" he repeated wistfully turning toward his home star and venting a cosmic sigh. "You might say she met with a Sirius accident."

THE END





The Miracle of Dan O'Shaughnessy

By

Evan Hunter

Television tubes shattered all over the country when Dan O'Shaughnessy sang. Naturally Washington was aghast. Was this an enemy plot?

SILING Arthur Geoffrey dipped his tea ball into his tea cup and then turned to the lovely young lady sitting beside him. The cameras dollied in for a closeup, and Arthur ducked his head bashfully and then asked, "And whom did you bring us this evening, Miss Masters?"

Miss Masters fluttered blond lashes over blue eyes. Nervously,

she said, "Dan O'Shaughnessy."

"Dan O'Shaughnessy," Arthur said reflectively, as if he were weighing an ounce of platinum. "And what does Mr. O'Shaughnessy do?"

"He sings," Miss Masters said.

"Where has he sung before?"

"He sang with the Boston Pops last June, where I discovered him, and he has made several appear-

ances at Carnegie Hall since then."

"Is this his first television appearance?" Arthur asked.

"Yes."

"And he's an operatic singer, is that correct?"

"Yes, Arthur."

"A *basso profundo?*" Arthur asked, deliberately slaughtering the Italian.

Miss Masters smiled. "No, a baritone."

"All right, then, let's listen to Dan O'Shaughnessy," Arthur said to his television audience, "and thank you for bringing him to us, Miss Masters."

Miss Masters moved away from Arthur's table, and the cameras focused on a tall, well-built boy with a nervous smile on his face. The orchestra started the opening strains of the Toreador song from *Carmen*, and Dan O'Shaughnessy cautiously opened his mouth.

* * *

"I don't like opera singers," Mike said.

"You got no culture," Anne answered.

"Culture, shmulture, I'm gonna have a glass of beer. Let me know when this bum is off."

He shoved himself up from the depth of the couch and walked into the kitchen.

"It wouldn't hurt to get some," Anne called from the living room.

"Get some what?"

"Culture."

"Who needs it?" Mike said. He opened the refrigerator door and pulled out a bottle of beer, expertly opening it, and reaching for a glass over the sink. From the living room, Miss Masters said, "No, a baritone."

Mike poured the beer into his glass, tilting the glass to prevent too large a head. He put the empty bottle under the sink, and then looked at the beaded, foaming glass of beer in his hand.

In the living room, the orchestra started the opening strains of the Toreador song from *Carmen*, and Dan O'Shaughnessy cautiously opened his mouth.

Mike brought the glass to his lips as O'Shaughnessy began singing. He felt the peculiar vibration at his finger tips and then the glass burst into a hundred flying fragments and beer spilled all over his undershirt.

"Hey, what the hell!" he said, and then he heard the crash from the living room.

* * *

"Fordham Radio and Television Repair," Forbes said into the telephone. "Yes, ma'm we do. Yes, ma'm. Yes, ma'm, I'll send a man right over. Yes, ma'm."

He put the phone back into its cradle and then turned wearily to

Anderson.

"It's an epidemic, I swear to God."

"What's an epidemic?" Anderson asked.

"Another picture tube shot. That makes thirty in the past hour. Dammit, why can't these guys stop making defective sets?"

"Maybe the sets ain't defective," Anderson said.

"Thirty tubes in an hour? They are bustin' up like Jane Russell."

Forbes looked over to where Anderson was checking over a call list. "I said they're bustin' up like . . ."

"I heard you," Anderson said.

"Yeah." Forbes looked at his partner gloomily. "If they made good sets, this wouldn't happen."

"What are you complaining about? It's more business for us."

"Still, it's a shame. You take my set. I got it for four years now, and I never had so much as a bit of snow on it. They don't make them like that anymore. Now they're all spit and glue, and defective picture tubes."

"Well, that's life," Anderson said. "Who's gonna answer all these calls?"

"We'll split 'em up and get to them when we can. Dave's comin' in tomorrow, ain't he?"

"Yeah," Anderson said.

"Well, there you are. We'll get

to them."

The phone rang again, and Anderson reached for it. "I've got it," he said. He lifted the receiver and said, "Fordham Radio and Television Repair?" He waited a moment and then said, "Oh, hello, Mary. Yes, he's here. Just a second."

"Who's that?" Forbes asked.

"Your wife."

"What does she want?"

Anderson uncovered the mouthpiece. "Mary, he's kind of jammed. Can I take a message?" He listened a moment and then said, "What! What was that aga . . . uh-huh, uh-huh, yes Mary, I'll tell him. Sure thing. So long." He hung up and then smiled.

"What'd she want?" Forbes asked.

"She wants you to come home right away."

"Why?"

"Your television tube shattered all over the living room floor."

Forbes clutched his heart.

"What!"

* * *

President:

Amalgamated Broadcasting System
3375 Madison Avenue
New York, New York

Dear Sir:

It was while I was watching Arthur Goeffrey's Talent Search show that this opera fellow came on and

began singing a bull fighting song. He smashed a vase my aunt sent all the way from Kalamazoo, Michigan, and he also busted my favorite ashtray where there was a cigar in it which fell and burned a hole in the living room couch.

I thought this was all, and I was ready to forgive and forget because to err is human. But this guy also busted two windows in my kid's room, and then the television tube exploded while my wife was passing by it at the time, and she now has glass splinters all over her and she can't sit down though the doctor is removing them. She is very sore about the whole thing.

So this is to tell you that I have contacted my lawyer, and that he will write a letter to the FCC on his letterhead, and that in the meantime I want payment for the vase which my aunt sent all the way from Kalamazoo, Michigan, and the ashtray, and the hole in the living room couch, and also the two windows in my kid's room (of which I have got an estimate from a glazier) and also my wife's splinters of which the doctor had to painstakingly remove. She is still very sore about the whole thing.

Trusting you are the same.

Sincerely,

Saml. P. (Peter) Alfredson

* * *

(from FIDDLING WITH THE

DIAL by Fred Fiddle, Hearst Syndicate, November 12, 1954 . . .)

. . . replacing Dinah Shore at her regular evening spot.

Current rumor has it that Amalgamated Broadcasting System has been flooded with a stream of protest letters over the alleged bursting of television tubes and other sundry glass products throughout the nation when a young singer did a song from *Carmen*. ABS officials have remained silent on the situation thus far, but George Klein, lawyer for the company, said a statement would be forthcoming

• • •
“NOW what the hell is all this about?” Fairchild shouted.

“Well, sir, we’ve been getting some letters about . . .”

“Some letters! Some letters! Miss Haswell, tell this damned idiot exactly how many letters we’ve received to date.”

“Three million, four hundred thousand, one hundred thirty-three and a half, sir,” Miss Haswell said.

“A half?” Smithers asked tremulously.

“A boy wrote a letter,” Miss Haswell said. “This singer smashed his aquarium, and his snake escaped.”

“Oh, my heavens!” Smithers said. “I hope no one was . . .”

“3,400,133½ letters, Smithers! Do

you know what that means? Have you any idea?"

"He's got a lot of viewers, hasn't he, sir?" Smithers asked, cocking an eyebrow and smiling hopefully.

"Too damn many viewers. Tell Geoffrey I want to see him at once. Tell him I want to know who this Shaughnessy fellow is, and tell him we've got law suits totalling billions of dollars piling in on this station. And tell Klein to get the hell up here right away. And tell production I want that Talent Search show screened every week. And hire some more stenographers and get the whole damned public relations department on this right away. I want every one of those letters answered, all three million, four hundred thousand, one hundred and thirty three of them."

"And a half," Miss Haswell said.

"And a half," Fairchild shouted.

"All of them. Do you know what this can mean? We can be ruined, ruined! And all because of some half-witted, long-hair opera singer! Find this Shaughnessy character! Find him and bring him to me! I swear this is a hoax. CBS or NBC is behind this, Smithers, I swear it. Find Shaughnessy!"

"Sir . . ." Smithers said.

"Find Shaughnessy!" Fairchild bellowed.

"Sir . . ."

"What the hell is it now, Smith-

ers?"

"It's O'Shaughnessy, sir. O."

"Ohhhhh," Fairchild moaned.

"**T**HIS way, O'Shaughnessy," the man in the trenchcoat said.

"But I don't understand what . . ."

"You'll find out soon enough," the man in the trenchcoat said.

"Can I take off the blindfold now?"

"Not yet," the man in the trenchcoat said.

They walked in silence down the long passageway. O'Shaughnessy holding tightly to the man's hand.

"This way," the man said.

O'Shaughnessy heard a door open, and then the man led him into what sounded like a large echoing room.

"Here he is, sir," the man said.

"All right, take off the blindfold."

O'Shaughnessy felt strong fingers at the back of his head. The knot on the blindfold slipped loose, and the cloth slid down over his nose and fell to the floor. He blinked his eyes and looked around the large room. A man was seated behind an immense desk. O'Shaughnessy tried to focus the man, and when he did, his mouth fell open and he stared in disbelief.

"Mister . . . Mister President!" he said.

"You've led us a merry chase, O'Shaughnessy," the President said, smiling.

"Look, Mr. President," O'Shaughnessy said, "I didn't mean any harm, believe me. I just . . . I just sang. I mean, they didn't have to call in the government on this. I'm just a singer, that's all."

"You're much more than that," the President said. "But X-1234-double-L will explain that to you, won't you, X-1234 double L?"

"Yes, sir," the man in the trench-coat said.

"Very well then. It was good meeting you, O'Shaughnessy."

"Thank you, sir."

The President extended his hand, and O'Shaughnessy took it. X-1234 double L led him out of the room then, and down a long corridor, and through a series of other rooms and other corridors, and then he opened a big oaken door and said, "In here, O'Shaughnessy."

"Will they send me to prison?" O'Shaughnessy asked.

"No," the secret agent said. "We just want to make a few routine tests."

"Oh," O'Shaughnessy said.

He made himself comfortable, and the secret agent went out, and O'Shaughnessy toyed with the idea

of escape. In a few moments, the agent came back with half a dozen men in white who rubbed their hands together and stroked their beards and clustered about him nodding their heads and mumbling.

"If you'll come with us, young man," one of the men said. "My name is Dr. Slaugh."

"How do you do, sir?" O'Shaughnessy asked.

"It's how *you* do that interests us," Slaugh said. "Come along now."

O'Shaughnessy followed the men into a long rectangular laboratory crammed with reports and test tubes and bunsen burners and curious looking flasks with bubbling liquids in them.

Slaugh went to one end of the laboratory and removed a test tube from its rack. "Just make yourself comfortable, Mr. O'Shaughnessy," he said.

"Thank you," O'Shaughnessy said. He looked for a chair, but there didn't seem to be any, so he made himself comfortable by leaning against the wall. Dr. Slaugh put the test tube onto a small stand, and then said, "All right, Mr. O'Shaughnessy, would you mind singing a few bars from the Toreador song?"

"All right," O'Shaughnessy said.

He cleared his throat and began singing, and the scientists watched

the test tube on its stand. O'Shaughnessy sang the song all the way through, and the test tube did not so much as vibrate.

"Hmmm," Dr. Slaugh said.

"Hmmm," the other scientists repeated.

"Perhaps if he were a little closer. Would you mind stepping in a little closer, Mr. O'Shaughnessy?"

"Not at all," O'Shaughnessy said. He stepped closer about five feet.

"Now, sing it again."

"Certainly." He opened his mouth and began singing again:

Nothing happened to the test tube.

"A little closer perhaps," Dr. Slaugh said. "Would you come a little closer, please, Mr. O'Shaughnessy?"

O'Shaughnessy moved closer and sang again.

"A little closer, please," Slaugh said.

O'Shaughnessy moved closer and continued singing.

"Hmm. A little closer."

O'Shaughnessy's nose touched the test tube, and he continued singing.

"This is curious," Slaugh said. "Uh, you may stop now, Mr. O'Shaughnessy."

O'Shaughnessy clenched his fist and sang loudly, carried away now.

"Mr. O'Shaughnessy, uh, you may stop now, thank you."

O'Shaughnessy stopped. "How'd you like it?" he asked.

"Not at all," Slaugh said.

"Well," O'Shaughnessy said defensively, "it got an 80 on Arthur Geoffrey's applause meter."

"And did you sing it now the same way you sang it that night on his show?"

"Of course," O'Shaughnessy said. "Better even."

"Mmmmm."

"Shall I sing it again?"

"No. No, thank you."

"Obviously," a short bald man said, "the voice must be transmitted in order to cause the, ah, chaos it . . ."

"Of course," Slaugh said enthusiastically. "Tell me, Mr. O'Shaughnessy, did you ever break things before?"

"I broke lots of things," O'Shaughnessy said proudly.

"You did?"

"Sure. When I was twelve years old, I broke my arm. And when I was . . ."

"With your voice?" Slaugh asked incredulously. "Good God, man . . ."

"No, no," O'Shaughnessy said, amused. "I broke my arm climbing a tree."

Slaugh sighed heavily. "Thank God," he said. "But with your

voice? Did you ever break anything with it? Before the television broadcast."

"No, I didn't, sir," O'Shaughnessy said. "And believe me, it wasn't my fault, either. I didn't want to break all those tubes and things. It just . . . happened."

"My boy," Slaugh said, "you're a veritable weapon. All we've got to do now is televise your voice and see what happens."

"Yeah?" O'Shaughnessy asked.

“WE'RE ready to go, doctor."

"Thank you, doctor. Are the tubes and retorts in place?"

"Yes, doctor."

"Thank you." Slaugh adjusted the glasses on the bridge of his nose. "Whenever you're ready then, doctor."

"I'll pass the word."

The cameras dollied in, and the audio system was turned on. O'Shaughnessy stood before the microphone, nervously licking his lips.

"Standby," a crewman warned.

A hushed silence fell over the laboratory.

"On the air," the man in the control booth said, and the signal light flashed below the booth.

"Tor-e-ador" O'Shaughnessy sang, and the glasses shattered on the bridge of Dr. Slaugh's nose.

(New York Daily News,
November 19, 1954)

SECRET WEAPON?

Observers in the vicinity of White Sands, New Mexico have the sneaky feeling that the government is testing a new secret weapon, reputedly stronger and more effective than the dread H-bomb. Repeated reports of glass shattering has reached the attention of high Washington officials who claim the theory is all rubbish.

"Blame it on flying saucers," Senator Gilhorn said earlier today in an exclusive interview with this newspaper. "We are not working on any secret weapon. That's all stuff and nonsense."

Informed opinion, however, does not hold with the senator's views. A nursery four miles south of White Sands was utterly demolished late Thursday afternoon for no apparent reason.

"I was just a-standin' there near the forsythias, Joshua Peel, owner of the nursery said, "when all hell come a-bustin' loose. Strangest damn thing I ever did see, I'm tellin' you."

Well, if all hell is a-bustin' loose, we feel we have a right to know about it. An informed American people is an intelligent American people. So how about it, Washington? What's going on at White

Sands?

Huh?

DO you understand what we are driving at, Mr. O'Shaughnessy?"

"I think so," O'Shaughnessy said.

"Well, let me explain it again. When televised, your voice is capable of shattering objects, usually of glass. The shattering first affects other objects, and then attacks the television tube from which your voice is emitting."

"When I'm singing, you mean?"

"That's right. Well, Mr. O'Shaughnessy, if your voice can shatter an entire nursery, what do you think it could do to the delicate triggering mechanism of an atomic bomb? Or even a hydrogen bomb?"

"Gee, I don't know," O'Shaughnessy said.

"Well, that's what we intend to find out. Because, Mr. O'Shaughnessy, if your voice can trigger off these deadly bombs, then we are forever secure from any enemies. All we'd have to do in case of attack would be to televise your voice up at a horde of approaching bombers. Their radar sets, which operate on a similar principle, would receive the electronic impulses, and then blooie! off goes the cargo of bombs."

"Blooie!" O'Shaughnessy said.

"Exactly. That's why we're making this test Saturday. We're setting up a standard radar scope alongside an atomic bomb, and then we're going to televise you at it."

"My God!" O'Shaughnessy said.

"Exactly."

* * *

The lean-faced man looked at the sweep hand of his watch.

"In exactly thirty-five seconds, ladies and gentlemen, there will be a national television blackout, mysteriously ordered by the FCC, and we know you're as puzzled about all this as we are. The blackout, as your newspapers have informed you, will last for exactly ten minutes, after which we will be allowed to transmit again."

"Twenty seconds now."

"Believe me, we do not know why the blackout was ordered, or just what the FCC has up its sleeve. Some people think it's got a lot to do with color television, though we honestly cannot see any connection."

"At any rate, we'll be returning to you . . ."

"Ten seconds now."

" . . . in exactly ten minutes, but for now we're closing down shop."

"Five seconds."

"Four."

"Three, two.

"One."

"**S**ING, O'Shaughnessy."

O'Shaughnessy gripped his throat. "I . . . I can't."

"What do you mean, you can't? The bomb is waiting, everything is set up. We're waiting, O'Shaughnessy! Mankind is waiting. The world is waiting! Sing, O'Shaughnessy!"

"I can't . . . I . . ." He strained his vocal chords and tried, but only a curious strangled sound came from his throat. "Nothing will come out, sir. It's like . . ."

"Like what?"

"Like I don't know, sir. I just . . . can't . . . sing."

"Try."

O'Shaughnessy opened his mouth and tried. Nothing came out. "It's no use, sir."

"Try again."

He tried again. "It's no good, sir. I can't sing anymore. I'm through, sir. Through!"

"You're telling me, O'Shaughnessy."

* * *

Smiling Arthur Geoffrey dipped his tea ball into his tea cup and then turned to the lovely young lady sitting beside him. The cameras dollied in for a closeup, and

Arthur ducked his head bashfully and then asked, "And whom did you bring us this evening, Miss Antone?"

Miss Antone fluttered black lashes over brown eyes. Nervously, she said, "Dan O'Shaughnessy."

"Dan O'Shaughnessy," Arthur said reflectively, as if he were weighing an ounce of platinum. "Dan O'Shaughnessy?" He shrugged. "And where did you find Mr. O'Shaughnessy?"

"In a saloon in the Bowery. I found him last June. June 16, 1967 to be exact."

"I see. And what does Mr. O'Shaughnessy do?"

"He whistles," Miss Antone said.

"Very well, thank you for bringing him to us, and let's hear Dan O'Shaughnessy whistle a little."

The orchestra played a short introduction, and O'Shaughnessy stepped to the microphone, pursed his lips nervously, and began to whistle.

* * *

"I don't like whistlers," Mike said from the kitchen where he was reaching for a beer bottle.

The bottle suddenly shattered in his fingers, and he yelled, "Hey, what the hell!" and then he heard the crash from the living room.

THE END

READ OUR NEW COMPANION
MAGAZINE — NOW ON SALE!

IMAGINATIVE TALES

Fish Fry

by

Arnold Marmor

Lots of strange things happen at sea. But this was a new twist, a fish that really wasn't a fish at all. So the question, who hooked what?

OFF Key West in the Florida Strait, with the bucking of the motor launch under the seat of my pants, and a rod and reel in my hands, I could relax. I mean really relax. Sometimes a cool current from the Gulf of Mexico would engulf me and it would be like something a man dreams about. Alone, under a blue sky, with one's thoughts. And then the thoughts would vanish as that familiar tug on the line meant a struggle was coming up. A battle between man and fish.

I love deep sea fishing. I was on a vacation with nothing to do but relax. Oh, there were women, all right. But one gets tired of women. But not fishing.

So here I was, this bright sunny afternoon, in my motor launch, when that tug on my line made me sit erect, and my brain became a-

lert. You have to think clearly. You have to know when to let out line and when to pull in line. When the fish got tired you could tell. It all comes through experience.

From the pull of the line I thought I'd hooked a sailfish.

I reeled in fast, then started letting out line. But the line didn't get taut. It was loose. At first I thought I'd lost it.

And then it climbed into the launch.

I got up fast and made ready to dive overboard.

"Hold on, fella," it said. "Don't get into a panic."

I stared at it. It was about four feet tall, with scales and two thick stubs that was supposed to be tails. It stood on its tails and blinked enormous eyes at me.

"The creature from the black lagoon," I said.

"To you I'm a creature," he said. "To me you're a creature."

"What kind of a fish are you?"

"I'm not a fish. I'm a Grenarian."

"You mean you eat vegetables?"

"I'm from the planet Grenaria."

"Look," I said. "You want this boat? Keep it. I'm off for Tampa. It's about time I took up drinking."

"You hate me."

"No, I don't. Honest. I'm just not used to these things."

"It happens all the time. What you don't understand you hate."

"But I don't. Honest. And where did you learn to talk?"

"I learned English from a professor. He understood my plight and tried to help. He was fishing the same as you when I caught hold of his line and we met."

"What happened to him?"

"He went back to tell his colleagues. I never saw him again."

"He's probably in the booby hatch," I said.

"What's that?"

"Where I'll be if I ever tell anyone this."

"This is a cruel world," he said. "By the way my name is Hrodes."

"And mine is Carol Engelholtz. Now that the formalities are over, what the hell are you doing here?"

"My orders were to make contact with this solar system. My

ship is at the bottom of the sea. I have to be near water or die. And every time I try to make contact I'm left alone on a craft of this sort."

"You mean they jump overboard?"

"That's exactly what I mean."

"You're from another galaxy?"

"Yes. My planet is covered with water. Your planet is the best one in this system which has water on it. That's why I'm here."

"But you're not in water now."

"My gills can still absorb it. As long as I'm near it."

"Well, what do you want me to do?"

"I want to meet someone with responsibility."

"I wouldn't be able to get anyone to come out here with a story like that. They wouldn't believe me. I'd end up with the professor."

"Then take me with you."

"But you wouldn't be near water. Wait a minute. I can leave you in the tub."

"Anything. I just want to get this mission over with."

"I can wrap you up in wet towels. I can drive you to my place and go bring someone back with me."

"Anything. Anything. Just let's get on with it."

"Why, I might be making history. I may become famous."

IMAGINATION

"Will you please start this craft back to land?"

"Sure thing. Just a second," I started the motor and headed for land.

Me. Carol Engelholtz. A liaison between two planets. I never felt so excited in my life. Why, it was more exciting than hooking a sailfish.

"There's my lodge," I shouted, pointing at the bluff just over a rise.

"You stay there alone?" Hrodes asked.

"I have a cook and a house-keeper. But they won't bother you. You'll stay in the tub in my bathroom while I go fetch somebody. But who do I go fetch?"

"Anyone with responsibility. I want to get this over with."

"Yes, yes, I know. Your mission." I docked the launch, soaked towels, wrapped them around Hrodes, carried him—or she—to my car, and in fifteen minutes I was home.

I left Hrodes in the tub and went back to the car. Miami was too far off. There was a small town called Chesterville a few miles away. It seemed the only place to go.

"There ain't no F. B. I. branch here," a deputy behind a battered desk said. He was about sixty, with

a skinny neck that was covered with half dollar size blotches.

"Better try Miami. Why? What's the matter? Find some subversives? A lot of subversives in Florida."

"No, no. nothing like that. Look, there must be a school or some kind of place for learning here."

"Shore thing. We gotta school."

"Isn't there a professor teaching there, maybe?"

"Nope. But we got old Mrs. Henshaw. Husband dièd about six years ago. Old bag. I think she's been running around lately with some tourist from Iowa. Now if you're just lookin' for any old professor, then—"

"That's right," I said, grasping at a straw. "Any old professor. Is there one in town?"

"Professor Klugelmeyer. Used to teach at some eastern college. Kind of dopey, though, I think. Funny old gaffer. Believes in flyin' saucers. Can you imagine?"

"When do I reach him?"

"He's stayin' at Mrs. Kirpatrick's roomin' house. Poor Mrs. Kirpatrick. Got a bad case of food poisoning. She ate—"

I ran out of the building and inquired for the rooming house. I found it and Professor Klugelmeyer.

"What? What? Hard to believe. Hard to believe. Once heard the

same story from Professor Dickson. The poor fellow was put-away. You must be mistaken, old man. You must be. Take my advice. Give up drinking. Bad for the liver, too, you know."

"That old deputy told me you believe in flying saucers," I said.

"I do. I really do. From Mars, probably. But they certainly won't turn out to be fish. Fish talking? Come now."

"I didn't believe it at first myself. Listen, Professor, come with me. See and hear for yourself."

"Well, I don't know."

It took me an hour before I had him half convinced. I almost dragged him to my car.

"This had better not turn out to be a practical joke," he said. The professor was somewhere between sixty and seventy. He was kind of thin and he sported a long white mustache.

It was getting toward evening when we got to the lodge.

I ushered him in to my room. "There," I said, flinging open the bathroom door.

"Where?" he said.

"There."

"Where?"

I looked. I blinked. I looked again. The tub was empty.

I raced through the house.

In the front room I saw Mrs. O'Brien, my housekeeper.

"Where's Hrodes?" I asked her.

"Who?"

"He was in the tub. I left him there."

"You mean that big fish?"

"Yes, yes. Where is he?"

"He's in the kitchen. We're having him for dinner."

"What?"

"Sure. Yat has it in the oven now."

"You murderer!"

"What are you talking about? It's only a fish. Didn't you catch him so we'd have fish for dinner?"

"No. Didn't he tell you who he was?"

"Are you crazy? He didn't tell me nothin'. Besides, I didn't see it till Sun Yat had it all cut up and laid out for cookin'."

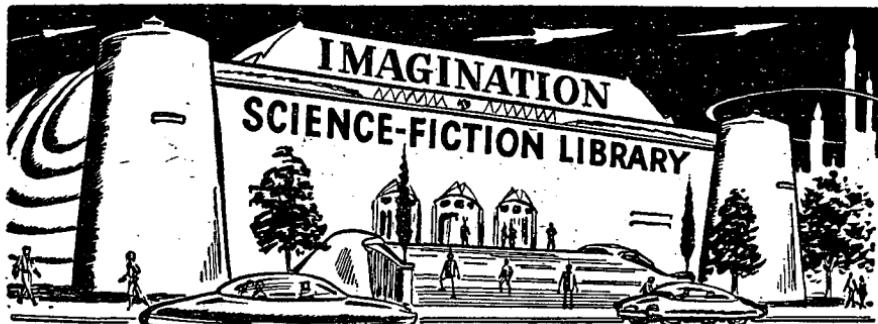
Sun Yat, my Chinese cook. Hrodes had met someone who couldn't understand his plight or be scared out of his wits. Sun Yat was a deaf mute!

The professor was clucking sadly at me as he stomped out of the house.

Me? There was nothing to do but eat my dinner . . .

THE END

**Featured next month ROBERT ABERNATHY'S NEW THRILLER:-
WORLD OF THE DRONE**



— REVIEWING CURRENT SCIENCE FICTION BOOKS —

Conducted by Henry Bott

Hard cover science fiction is booming and many fine novels and anthologies are available at all bookstores or by writing direct to the publishers. Each month *IMAGINATION* will review several titles — candidly — as a guide to your book purchases.

THE ALTERED EGO

by Jerry Sohl. 248 pages, \$2.50
Rinehart & Company, Inc. New
York, New York

While not cut to the same diverting measure as his "Costigan's Needle", Jerry Sohl's new volume is an entertaining and amusing blend of science fiction and mystery.

The story simply outlines the efforts of the prominent 21st century scientist Carl Kempton to trace the killers of his equally famous father. The theme on which the story is built is the neat idea of Restoration, a process of immortality, involving the rebuilding of a human being!

Sohl's forte in all his stories is characterization, rather stylized and smooth in the manner of the slick magazines, but adequate.

The story is mildly entertaining in a desultory way; you wouldn't go out of your way to read it, but having picked it up, you'll want to finish it at least. This negative praise is intended. There is too much disguising of mystery stories by a thin veneer of science—and calling the product science fiction.

Jerry Sohl is a competent writer. It wouldn't take too much effort for him to find a suitable idea. Let's hope that in his future novels (no pun intended) he constructs something more interesting.

In reviewing a mediocre novel of this sort it is difficult for the reviewer to refrain from editorializing. But no apology is necessary. S-f is being bombarded by too much hackneyed junk. Let's go!

FANTASY FILM FLASHES

by

Forrest J. Ackerman

— Hollywood Film Editor —

AS I sit down for another session of scientifilm predictions at the typewriter, a telephone call comes from *Ray Bradbury* who tells me "the heat's on" at Warner Bros for the possible production of the first picture for projection on asbestoscreen: his own incendiary FAHRENHEIT 451! The giant thriller, *THEM!*, has been a gigantic success at the box office, so the brothers Warner want to repeat. The combustible Bradburyarn has generated considerable enthusiasm in the Front Office.

Valor Productions plans a Panavision color production of "IF!", an original saucerian space-&-time travel story scripted by Wyott Ordung, who will also direct. Ben Hayne, who created Klaatu's discussip in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, has been approached to design the combination space-time traveler; I have been inked as Technical Adviser; and new stf find Paul Blaisdell looks likely for the astronomical art. In one part of the picture the craft's crew leaps ahead to a desert Earth of giant trap-door spiders in the Year One Million.

From A. D. to B.C., Hollywood plans a *King Dinosaur*, an original

terror-dactyl tale by Gerald Heard; a remake of Conan Doyle's *Lost World* in technicolor; *Ring Around Saturn* ("Saturn" is not the planet but a *bull*, who in the highlight of the picture will fight a prehistoric saurian, animated by an entirely new, electronic process); *The Return of the Creature* (from the Black Lagoon), a possible remake of the classic *KING KONG*; a technicolor original by stf writer Albert de Pina called *Destination Unknown*; and (being paid by the word I appreciate marquee mouthfuls like this one) *The Beast from 1,000,000 B. C.*

Moving futureward again, *Mission*, in 1956 is scheduled to be filmed in 1955; Universal Studios will produce an original by Harry Essex called "1980"; and George Orwell's emotion-jolter of the slave new world of "1984" has been optioned for filming in England.

Shade of A. Merritt, Universal has a *Snake Woman* on the docket. Shade of Im-ho-tep, "Abbott & Costello Meet the Mummy" as they pyramid the ruins of ancient Egypt. (I know; it Sphinx.)

"Jungle Jim and the Moon Men" are liable to bump into "The Monster with the Atomic Brain" on the Columbia lot, as both are reported-

ly in production.

Mickey Rooney will next be seen as *The Atomic Kid*, too radio-active to handle. Which reminds me: how about Marilyn Monroe as "Toffee"?

Roger Corman, President of Palo Alto Productions, has called me to see about getting together on terms with Frank M. Robinson for his exciting time-chase novelet, *The Hunting Season*. *Son of the Stars*, the best-selling juvenovel by Raymond F. Jones, and A. E. van Vogt's "The Shadow Men" are being read by Corman with an eye to filming, along with Ed Earl Repp's *The Radium Pool*.

A remake of the Lon Chaney jr. starrer, *The Electric Maze*, is scheduled for Universal production. As I remember the original, it was pretty good, and a re-release might do just as well.

A mad doctor deal has been cooked up for Bela Lugosi, called "The Phantom Ghoul".

FORBIDDEN UNIVERSE is being packaged as a biggie with an \$800,000 budget, with star names, Jacque Fresco for model work, Forrest J. Ackerman as Technical Adviser, Paul Blaisdell on art. William Dean Cox is currently developing the script from an original screen treatment by Edward Nathan Spiegel. It'll be the first scientifilm featuring the star-drive.

Ray Bradbury's THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES has been optioned by John Huston.

GEORGE Pal lunched with me recently, seeking the right property for his next spectacle. We

talked about Philip Wylie's *TOMORROW* and *THE DISAPPEARANCE*, among others, and he left with a copy of *SLAN*, an original by Charles Beaumont about the conquering power of jungle forces over a future civilization, and works by S. Fowler Wright and others. There is a possibility of Pal's being interested in combining John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* with an original screen treatment by Milton Luban & Kendall Foster Crossen called *Barrier to the Stars*. Stuart J. Byrne has also submitted some daring and original ideas to Mr. Scientifilms.

A Science Fiction Theater, under the auspices of Richard Carlson, is promised on the tele-channels soon.

Ray Bradbury's fantasy, *Black Ferris*, has been filmed for videotcast.

George Landy has been studying Ron Hubbard's *Final Blackout*, "The Purple Monsters" by Bob Olsen, *Superhuman* by John Russell Fearn, "Smile of the Sphinx" by William F. Temple, and several others, to find the right plot for production with a European background.

Jack Seaman has renewed his option on the A. E. van Vogt-E. Mayne Hull original for telefilm series, "Pell Melton: the Man from the Moon", scripted by Seaman and Forrest J. Ackerman.

Arthur Hilton, seeking a swash-buckling science fictioner has been shown "The Kingslayer" by L. Ron Hubbard. For production in England, Hilton is also considering a choice of a screen treatment of *Time Wants a Skeleton* by Ross

Rocklynne and the Ackermans (Forrest & Wendayne), "The Dark Other" by Stanley G. Weinbaum, and *The Secret of the Snow Men* by Charles Beaumont & John Tomerlin.

It is rumored that Fritz Lang will re-do his classic, *THE GIRL IN THE MOON*.

Arch Oboler will menace the world with ever-growing, insatiably hungry living tissue in his next scientifilm.

Cinemactor John Payne who has been known to write fantasy under a penname, would like to star in an s.f. picture and/or produce one.

Destruction Orbit has been changed to *Duel on Icarus*, and *The House at Alamagordo* to *The House at Frenchman Flat*. The two will comprise a single feature called *TIME OF TERROR*.

Producer Rick Strauss has optioned Chad Oliver's "The Edge of Forever" and Jack Williamson's *The Humanoids* for future productions.

Target—Earth! will be the screen title of "Deadly City", the sci-fi story authored by Paul W. Fairman under his penname Ivar Jorgenson. Wyott Ordung & James Nicholson collaborated on the screen-play. Nicholson was a high school chum of mine and one time Vice-President of the Boys Scientifiction Club. Film concerns robot invaders intent on taking over one of our big cities, and the reactions of a handful of people who are menaced by them.

GREEN-OUT!, a 25,000 word shocker by newcomer John Bennett, has excited the attention of Ivan Tors, who immediately purchased

it from the Science Fiction Agency. Tors, who produced *Gog*, *Riders to the Stars* and *The Magnetic Monster*, has many other scientifilms on his agenda, including *The Insect Story*, *The Flying Lab* and *The Place of Silence*.

HOLLYWOOD has produced a "Cat Women from the Moon"; England retaliated with a "Devil Woman from Mars". This could mean war!

Phone-check with Morris Scott Dollens elicits the information that he is still doing pre-production work on *Far Horizons*, his tour of the solar system travelog.

Raymond F. Jones' opus of the Peace Engineers, *THIS ISLAND EARTH*, complete with the naked brained Mutant, was scheduled for a premiere at the World Science Fiction Convention in San Francisco. It is not known at this date whether the mutant made a personal appearance to sign autographs with his tendrils.

Ray Bradbury's "Outcasts of the Stars" which had previously been produced as a radio play will be filmed under the title of *The Rocket*.

Chesley Donavan Foundation director Tad Duke and a number of members have left for extensive location shots near Palomar, 29 Palms and Joshua, in California, for landscape footage on *Project: Mars*. Paul Shoemaker is astronomical expert, with interplanetary art supplied by Duke and Ron Cobb.

The Ted Allan Studios, which are producing a fantasy musi-comedy, "Contraband Day Dreams", may

choose one of three Hubbard novels for feature filming next: *Death's Deputy*, *Typewriter in the Sky* or *Slaves of Sleep*.

Space Jockey has been completed but may never be released. It's said to be that bad. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Audiences complained.

"Space Island", "Space Fortress" and "The Thirteenth Moon" have all been announced. But MGM seems to have shelved plans for *The Fatal Planet* (Jupiter) and a Mark Clifton collaboration (original).

The arc-lights have been lit on I CAPTURED THE SUN, the solar spectacle scripted by Albert de Pina.

Packager William James has approached me with a plan to create Science Fiction Filmmakers, a tele-film series which he would like me to emcee. Properties already optioned include *Black Destroyer* by A. E. van Vogt; three by Chad Oliver; Rog Phillips' "The Old Martians"; "A Matter of Perspective" by S. J. Byrne; "Space Academy" by England's technical expert, author, and the editor of Authentic Science Fiction, H. J. Campbell; with other material selected by Anthony Boucher, Isaac Asimov, Adele Comandini (*Venus Calling*), Arthur J. Cox, Ford McCormack, and numerous others.

G. Gordon Dewey's original, *The Earth Watchers*, has several producers interested.

Professional scripter Anna Hunger has collaborated with R. DeWitt Miller to cinemadapt his *The Master Shall Not Die!* into a screenplay.

Milt Luban's gusty ghostory, *The Spirit Is Willing*, has been optioned as a seance fiction starrer for Rory Calhoun. Rumor has it to be filmed in CinemaSpook.

Curt Siodmak tells me, "I'm on a science-horror deal for Sam Katzman. Script is about amygdala stimulations—the remote control of animals and humans by electric impulses. Gruesome—I can't read that stuff!"

The production of giants 15 feet tall is the aim of a scientist in a screenplay by Edward H. Dodd, jr., bought by Hollywood.

In 1949, in the Arkham Sampler Poll, Everett F. Bleiler, A. Langley Searles, Henry Kuttner and I voted into 5th place in the Basic Science Fiction Library the novel *To Walk the Night*. This modern classic has since been televised, and it is with delight that I have been advised and pass on to you the information from the author William Sloane, that TO WALK THE NIGHT has been optioned for production as a major feature. Columbia once turned his "Edge of Running Water" into a credible Karloffilm called *The Devil Commands*. I might recommend a release of this at this time.

See you at the box office!

—Forrest J. Ackerman

COMING SOON:—

HIGHWAYS IN HIDING
A GREAT NEW SERIAL BY GEORGE O. SMITH



Conducted by *Mari Wolf*

EVERY so often some fan sits down and starts classifying science fiction. This can be a comparatively simple task, if he sticks to a few major subdivisions of the field, but usually he doesn't.

You have mood stories, and stories about people which really wouldn't be science fictional at all except that they take place in the far future. Here, the purist would say that they're science fiction only if the conditions of this future have a strong and distinct bearing on the story — if it's just boy meets girl on Alpha Centauri IV, nothing else, it isn't stf . . .

You have the whole field of psychological stf and sociological stf. You have Bradbury's Mars, which is hardly the fourth planet of the astronomy books, but who would say that Bradbury doesn't write science fiction? (Sure, people say it all the time, but that's be-

cause they pick a too limiting definition.)

There are always borderline stories, or ones which refuse to fit neatly into any category, but in most professional science fiction magazines you can pick up a story, start reading it, and think "space opera" or "fantasy" or "horror story"—here's the vampire already." This acceptance of the classification system is almost necessary, as each sub-field has its own special conventions. The Gothic horror story, for instance, has a "science" all its own—silver bullets, and the hours when werewolves change, and the maidens who are safe among wild beasts. The space opera, or high adventure in a vacuum, shares its conventions with the western and the tales of the days of barbarism—heroes who are bigger than life, villains who escape to fight again, all the way to the

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last installment, girls who are usually none too bright but always photogenic (Space opera may make the girl a system-famed biologist or physicist, but in the crisis she clings to the hero and does the equivalent of the days-when-knights-were-bold swoon.)

Now, maybe I'm overly particular, but when I read a story I like to be able to recognize the conventions against which it's written. If it stresses science, I want the science accurate. If it stresses characterization, I want the people accurate. If it's high adventure or fantasy that's fine too—as long as it's consistently so. (Toffee may not be an extrapolation out of anyone's theory, but isn't she fun to know?)

But—it's the rare story which can combine the elements of science and fantasy. In professional writing, the story that combines them sells. In amateur writing, it gets published in a fanzine and drives the readers nuts.

There's a fault I've noticed in a huge percentage of fanzine stories. It's the mixing in of an air of scientific accuracy with just about every incorrect concept you could think of. Now, scientific accuracy isn't essential in a fanzine. You can write an adventure story about what happened on the third moon of the sixteenth planet of Tau Ceti without more than the most rudimentary knowledge of astronomy, physics, biology, or math. (It helps to know a little about people, but if your protagonists are Martian mercenaries and Cetarian Xuprs it doesn't much matter.) But if you're writing a story about

the first rocket trip to the Moon, and you're stressing the actual physical happenings of the trip more than the personalities of the voyagers, and you still manage to bloop the way so many of the fan writers bloop, well . . .

FOR instance; this time there's a story in a fanzine that shall be nameless here about a rocket trip to the Moon. The ship blasts off. It gets up 67 miles, at which time it's traveling 24,000.6 miles an hour, and here it runs out of fuel. The fuel tanks have cracked on take-off. The ship has wings, so the crew decides to glide it to a landing on Earth. Very quickly it stops rising, glides to a stop, turns over, nose down, crosses Nevada at 4000 miles, per hour, crosses over the Colorado River at 1000 miles per hour, skims over Los Angeles and then heads down for an attempted landing in the ocean. Now, aside from wondering how it happened to be able to slow to those speeds in its glide—what made it slow down so abruptly from its 24,000.6 mph speed going up? At that speed it could have gone into a very high orbit about the Earth. (Escape velocity is 25,000 mph, and velocity needed to orbit is from 14,000 to 18,000 mph.) It apparently didn't circle or ellipse the Earth time after time while slowing down. It just descended. As to what acceleration it was traveling under to build up such a speed in 67 miles, and how it managed to get through the rather dense lower layers of atmosphere without burning up (unless it did all its accelerating after it was up quite

a few miles) well, these points are neglected.

Still, there have been worse. There have been all the stories in which the ship collides with a meteor that tears a gaping hole in it, and while the crew rushes about looking for something with which to repair it the pressure slowly drops. (If you want such a situation done well, think of Heinlein and his boy-who-sat-on-the-pillow-on-top-of-the-tiny-hole.) Disregarding the apparent rarity of meteors large enough to damage a ship (who knows, maybe they're in the asteroid belt; though an asteroid is hardly a meteor it could act like one); still, with a yawning hole into a vacuum, what keeps the air in while the people put on their space suits? In the same category are the stories about men outside their ships in space suits which are somehow punctured (usually the victim is the villain, who has just lost the fight with the hero). Poor villain spends a long time dying, most dramatically, and usually from a mere lack of air, nothing to do with the pressure differential . . .

There was the planet in one story a couple of months ago where helium was the equivalent of oxygen in the chemical set-up. (What did it combine with?) And all the stories, holdovers perhaps from an earlier era, where if you want antigravity you just go out and discover a new element which has such properties.

Still, why blame fans? If you can go to the movies and see a picture where the spaceship missed the Moon and hit Mars instead, and

where you can hear the meteors boom-booming in the vacuum, well, why expect more of amateurs? To me, it's a question easy to answer. To be a science fiction fan presupposes that you have a certain interest in the scientific method. If you don't know much about work in rocketry, or astronomy, or chemistry, why base your story in these fields? Why not stick to a time machine, or telepathy, or even aliens whose spaceships wouldn't necessarily have to be anything like ours? Or, if you want to violate the accepted premises of physics or chemistry, at least *know* that you're violating them and present your readers with some reason for doing so that's consistent with the basic premises of your story. If your story is set in a future where flaws have been found in relativity theory and the speed of light is no longer considered the limit of velocity, okay. Only say so. And if you're not strong on at least the conventions of stf (even if not the laws of science) why not stick to space opera or fantasy? It's just as good—better in a lot of cases. And certainly better than the comedies of errors that fill so many fanzine pages.

However, in spite of all I've just said I'm not in favor of the current movement to outlaw fiction from fanzines and run non-fiction only. The fanzines are a fine place for the budding writer. And you can find a lot of really good, off-trail stories there.

But still, I sometimes wish that some fan who wants to hear meteors in outer space, or run a rocket ship that gets lost and am-

bles off to Jupiter instead of Mercury would either control his typewriter or build up a consistent mythology or parallel system set-up in which his flights of fancy could happen. If he did that, it wouldn't be pure stf any longer and who could kick?

Besides, who knows, it might be good . . .

* * *

Now to the fanzines.

PSYCHOTIC: 10c or 3/25c; Richard E. Geis, 2631 N. Mississippi, Portland 12, Oregon. Geis has created a new problem with his "at-least-once-a-month-but-more-of-them-if-I-have-the-material" publishing schedule. Somehow, I always seem to have more than one issue around when I start the reviews. Of course this could be an advantage with some zines; I could review the best issue. With *Psychotic* though, they're all good. Number 13 is in front of me now and I wonder if the 13 jinx could have hit Geis. When I first looked at the cover I thought it was a liquor ad. It looked like a corkscrew on a field of bubbles. After a close look, however, I realized that the bubbles were planets and that the corkscrew was a rocket doing barrelrolls through space leaving a spiral trail behind it. One of the things that I think have made *Psychotic* a top zine is the clean, simple cover. Mr. Geis, how could you?

In this issue are some illustrations by Bob Kellogg. Very, very good. I hope Geis has more of them. And of course, there are the usual things and stuff and as a bonus, a short, short story by Harlan El-

lison. The story is called "The Little Boy Who Loved Cats" and, alone, is worth the dime that Geis gets for the zine.

Rating: 1.

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A BAS: Boyd Raeburn, 14 Lynd Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada. There is no price on this copy. I guess that these people just aren't money hungry. On the cover it says Volume 2, number 2, but I've (unfortunately) seen only two or three of them. Along with most of the Canadian fanzines I've seen, it's quite a bit more mature than the average U. S. zine. The zine has no particular order to it, starting with some letters from readers, and then going into a rather humorous bit about 'landnapping'. I'm afraid that the landnapping piece will go over the heads of most American fans. Most Americans haven't the slightest idea of Canadian geography. (But, surprisingly, most Canadians know the U.S. very well.)

Gerald Steward gives a report of the '54 Midwestercon. This is at least the fifteenth report of that Convention that I've read and every one of them tells a different story. This would be the place to coin a line about 'all things to all people.'

The section of *A Bas* that I enjoyed most was the last page. It was a column called "The Sounds" by Boyd Raeburn. Boyd's name must have influenced his life; the column is concerned with cool musicians. Brubeck, Gerry Mulligan and a few others. I don't know what their music has to do with science fiction though. The funny thing was that the night I received

A Bas I was walking down Hollywood Blvd., and there, in one of the two by ten bars, was the Brubeck quartet. If you're interested only in fandom, *A Bas* is not for you. They get off the subject quite often.

Rating: 3.

* * *

SCINTILLA: 10c Larry Anderson, 2716 Smoky Lane, Billings, Montana. This is rather slim for a dime but the reproduction is good and the cover cartoon is even funny the second time you look at it. Joanne Cooper has a story called "Dinner Date" that is well written but even the writing can't make the plot passable.

The only other feature is an article by Mack Reynolds, reprinted from *Spaceship*. Called "Make the First Ones Short," Reynolds gives advice to trying writers. The advice is very sound but it's hard to follow.

The thing that confuses me about *Scintilla* is the fact that the editor, who lives in Billings, Montana, says that Billings is near the town of Coings and yet the postmark is Polytechnic, Mont. It just ain't right!

Rating: 5

* * *

SCIENCE FICTION ADVERTISERS: 20c; Dept. D, 1745 Kenneth Road, Glendale 1, Calif. One of the best things that I can say about the *Advertiser* is that, although it comes out quarterly, it always seems that I haven't seen a copy for six or eight months. If, somehow, you have never seen a copy you should feel properly ashamed. It's a beautifully clear

photo-offset with excellent layout and art. This issue, like most, has a cover by Dollens—a moonscape, I think. About the only similarity between this and a fanzine is the fact that, as usual, the editor never collects as much as he spends. And, when you think of the price of photo-offset . . . whee!

Leading off is an article by Anthony More, "Arthur Clarke: Prophet with a Poet's License." This is one of the few 'author dissected' type articles that I've liked. And not only that, I agree. Bob Tucker's "Science Fiction News Letter" does a Winchell on SF doings, even covering the latest operations. This issue has a rather new thing called the "Speculative Department" that should work into a big thing. Any sort of ideas are welcome as long as they present a topic for speculation. Hal Clement, for example, wonders about a rather compact planetary system set up so that, for physical reasons, interplanetary travel is impossible. Yet both planets are inhabited by intelligent races that, because of the small scale of the system, have become aware of their planetary neighbors. Interesting, no?

Oh, yes, there are also eight pages of current book reviews.

Rating: 1

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ALPHA: Dave Vendelmans, Stryd-hoflaan 130 Berchem-Antwerp, Belgium. Either 60c worth of stamps for a year's sub or an exchange subscription. This, according to the editor, is the only fanzine published in Belgium and, possibly, the only one in continental Europe. It's very interesting

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reading with both of the editors writing sections and, in this issue, a spot by Walt Willis and Terry Jeeves. This zine should be of interest to American fans not only because it is somewhat of a collectors' item but because of the trials encountered by fans in Europe. If you want to make some Belgian friends, try sending them some stf books. If you are anything like me you have stacks of stf or fantasy pocketbooks and magazines around that aren't being saved as a collection but are just there waiting to be disposed of. Why not send them to *Alpha*?

Rating: 3

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DIMENSIONS: 20c; Harlan Ellison, 41 E. 17th St., Columbus 1, Ohio. There's going to be some comment on this one from fans who think that fanzines shouldn't look like prozines. This one is set up in newsstand format, with "Falcons of Narabedla," by Marian Zimmer Bradley, blurbed across the bottom of the front cover and "The Inside Story of the Harold Shea Novels", by Fletcher Pratt, headlined in the upper right. Harness' cover by the way is a good one—though the reproduction isn't too good on this grade paper.

There's a lot of interesting reading material here. The fiction is way above average for fan fiction, in writing style at least, with Charles Ryan's "The Sun Shines at Midnight" about the best story in the lot. There's a group of illos by de, or David English, that are fantastic as ever, and there's an included folio of Bill Dignin's cartooning also.

Fletcher Pratt discusses some of the problems of writing fantasy based on myth or legend, and of creating settings on worlds where magic works and science doesn't. (Despite Pratt's and De Camp's very successful development of this last theme the idea hasn't been analyzed much in the "you-dissect-this-author-and-I'll-carve-up - that-one" columns.)

Good all around reading matter here. Only the 20c price keeps it out of top rating.

Rating: 3

* * *

MERLIN: Lee Anne Tremper, 1022 N. Tuxedo St., Indianapolis 1, Ind. As long as they last, editor Tremper will send out copies of this zine free on request—though she says that enough for postage would be appreciated. It's a first issue, taking over some of the material gathered for *Indiana Fantasy* and it may be the last issue too. (I hope not—it's not bad looking at all for a first attempt.)

The fiction leans somewhat to the weird and high adventure. Brian McNaughton's "Black Branches" has a red-haired barbarian hero (not named Conan) and man eating trees. Juanita Wellon's "Space," about the girl who is the first rocket ship pilot, didn't say much of anything that hasn't been said before. Dave Jenrette's "Evolution" deals with the theme of the people in the future returning to Earth's surface from the caves. There's also Jay Crackel's "History of *Weird Tales*."

Reproduction is fairly good, and the Carol Puma cover is a nice bit of semi-weird art. This one

has to be considered a good buy because of the low(non-existent) price.

Rating: 3

* * *

ETHERLINE: Edited by Ian J. Crozier, subscriptions to AFPA (Amateur Fantasy Publications of Australia), 4 Myrtle Grove, Preston, Victoria, Australia. Price per copy is 6d in Australia; I can't find the price per single copy in the United States currency, but 13 issues are \$1.00 so you can take it from there.

In the issue I have here Lyel Crane writes an unusual convention report. My, how he gets around. He reminisces about, and compares, the world science fiction conventions, in Toronto and Cincinnati, also London's international convention, which he apparently just happened to catch while he happened to be in England. Now he's looking forward to Australia's convention — he's going to make that one too. What, are you shooting for Ackerman's record, Lyell?

Also there are fanzine reviews and reports on the activities of the various Australian clubs. And a story by John Hitchcock which somehow has English remembered as an ancient language (no explanation given) by the humanoid natives of Alpha Centauri IV.

Rating: 3

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STARLANES: 40c; Orma McCormick, 1558 W. Hazelhurst St., Ferndale 20, Mich. *Starlanes*, subtitled "The International Quarterly of Science Fiction Poetry," is an especially good looking magazine. It's printed, uses high quality pa-

per and a simple cover. It also contains some of the best poetry you'll find being written on fantasy, weird, and science fictional themes. As editor McCormick says, they'll publish "the unusual, fantastic, weird, and futuristic verse in any form, but rhymed science fiction is preferred . . ."

I imagine everyone who likes poetry will have his own favorites here. I especially liked K. Houston Brunne's "Worlds," but when it comes to picking second choice there are just too many.

If you're interested in fantasy poetry you'll want this one; if you don't like poetry, or if your pocket-book doesn't extend to the "little" magazines, there's nothing for you here.

Rating: 6

* * *

SPACEWAYS: 15c; quarterly; Ralph Stapenhorst, 409 W. Lexington Dr., Glendale 3, Calif. Stapenhorst's cover on this one is an interesting photo offset picture of supplies being unloaded in midair (or mid-vacuum, rather). The rest of the zine is dittoed, legibly enough but not very artistically, making the cover the best looking part by far.

In this issue I have here there are two short stories, Don Howard Donnell's "The Missionary," which, though it depends on a surprise ending, is quite good as a tale about what happens to an alien who travels backwards in time to avert catastrophe on Earth. Ron Cobb's "Top Secret" also depends on a surprise ending, but less successfully; the premise of the group of amateurs keeping

their project secret from the government (how?) is a little too much.

Artwork isn't so good, except for Terry Carr's "Face Critturs", which turn up all over fandom, wonderful as ever.

* * *

ANDROMEDA: 30c or 2/ ; Peter Campbell, 60 Calgarth Rd., Windermere, England. After growing bigger and bigger for issue after issue, *Andro* has finally reached an upper limit. It's now advertized not as bigger than ever but better than ever.

The reproduction is good; the cover layout is pretty good too. Fiction is considerably above average for fanzines. Still, 30c is a lot of money too . . .

Dan Brennan's "Never Had It So Good" takes place mostly in heaven, where the story opens with a group of pilots, most of them casualties of World War II, who choose to spend eternity together (not like pilots I've known — no stewardesses, even). They miss fighting, though, and finally are given a chance to make one more mission—over the Yalu River. (The concept of heaven's being on our side was never taken for granted more implicitly.) Quite a story, but I couldn't see the characterization, either of the men or of the angels.

There's more fiction, an article on electronics versus optics as applied to space travel, by George Whiting, and even a small sized crossword puzzle.

Rating: 5

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BREVZINE: 15c; bi-monthly; Warren A. Freiberg, 5369 W. 89th St., Oak Lawn, Ill. Freiberg is now listed as publisher and chairman of the board (of W. A. Freiberg & Co.) and Erwin Hughmont is listed as the editor. The zine's the same though—it still praises everything in it to the skies and runs through a whole list of superlatives while describing its fiction and the writers.

In this issue there's Elmer Kirk's "How Ghastly She Looks," about a man who finds a "scarlet witch" on the streets to take a like part in his play. (The college dean wouldn't let a student take such a degraded part, but apparently he had no objections to letting his pure coeds come in contact with such a "ghastly" creature.) Oh well, later on in the story you find that the dean's not what he seemed to be, anyway . . . There's also Robert Gene Warner's "Hiding Place," whose only fantasy element, as far as I can see, is the strange feeling of warmth you get while committing suicide by suffocating in a trunk that's "the gateway to reunion."

Oh well, it could be the best fanzine in the world and it still couldn't live up to Freiberg's claims for it. As for the way it is—well, there are some readers who apparently write in to the letter column saying they like it.

Rating: 8

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FANTASY-TIMES: 10c; twice a month; James V. Taurasi, 137-03 32nd Ave., Flushing 54, N. Y. The "world's oldest science fiction

newspaper" is still going strong, bringing you all the news of the stf field, both here and abroad.

You can keep up on editorial changes and changes of ownership of magazines; you can get reviews of stf movies, radio and TV programs, even comic books. Especially interesting are overseas notes from England, Australia, Holland (on the Dutch magazine *Space Fiction*) and the first reports of the various stf conventions all over the world.

Rating: 3

* * *

That's all the zines for this time. Next time there'll be a new crop. If you have a zine you want included in a review, send it to me, Mari Wolf, *Fandora's Box*, IMAGINATION, Box 230, Evanston, Ill. Also, if you have any comments about the ratings, let me know, won't you?

—Mari Wolf

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"Really, Jim—sometimes I think you're not human!"

Letters

from the Readers

HAVE A COW . . . ?

Dear Mr. Hamling:

I liked almost all the stories in the September issue; I particularly liked the views expressed on "security" in WELCOME TO PARADISE.

BUT, the BATTLE OF THE BELLS was the most disgusting story I have ever read. It had the kind of juvenile air, as if outhouses, etc., were things to — as the expression goes—"have a cow over"! That is not what one would expect in as fine a magazine as Madge. In short, it was sickening!

By the way, I should like to make a claim. I know what is wrong with many science fiction stories. The authors are so interested in "ideas" and "action" that such elemental things as correct grammar, good characterization, and a good plot are ignored; at least partially.

This may be obvious, but it makes the difference between good and bad sf stories, just as with any other type of literature.

In closing, I would like to hear

from any teenage sf fans who would care to correspond with me.

Paula Friedman
3722 Appleton St., NW
Washington 16, D.C.

We rather thought Bixby's story to be a delightful little fantasy. Guess we kind of had a cow over it, Paula with

CRUD TITLES?

Dear Bill:

Get rid of Terry—at least as a cover artist. His inside illos are on the whole all right. I kept my mouth shut about the August issue cover; everyone's entitled to a boner now and then. But two in a row!

McCauley is wonderful. His July cover was very enjoyable. He is an expert at the human form, and his shading is excellent. On the other hand, Terry's shading is lousy, he can't draw people and his women look downright stupid. Being a member of the "sometimes" more gentle sex, I resent that. I think the one thing that was wrong

with the August cover was that he did not try to confine himself to just one scene but had to portray the whole mess in one shot. On the September cover he had too much red, yellow, and muddy brown, and not enough cool color.

The inside of the last two issues were divided into two camps; awful bad and fairly good. I wish you would stop slapping those titles on your short stories; THREE SPACEMEN LEFT TO DIE was a good story, but the title made me think: "Oh, dear God, here we go with the crud again!" The titles and the covers scare away a lot of prospective customers, who take one look at the magazine and the contents page and reach for *Galaxy*.

On this matter of a space station. Naturally I feel that the USA should be the first country to have a hitching post up there; I'm a fairly normal, red-blooded, alert citizen, and most others feel the same way. That is, those who have stopped to think—I mean really think about the matter. The trouble is that a large percentage of the public, if interviewed, would say: "A space station? My dear, space stations are centuries from now!" I say, along with *Madge*, that they're not, and that we would have had one some time ago, if the public and the brass hats had gotten over the belief that a space station is centuries ahead.

Janice Jacobson
2430 Garth Ave.

Los Angeles 34, Cal.

Since you like McCauley, we'll bet the cover this month really pleases you!—So what's wrong with our

story titles? Would you rather have an uncipherable one word affair that you couldn't even pronounce? Not in *Madge*, praise be! We agree with you on the space station—it is not centuries ahead—except in some bureaucratic minds. A decade ago most people thought atomic power was a dream wh

MADGE'S FRIENDLY READERS

Dear Mr. Hamling:

At last another Geoff St. Reynard story! VENGEANCE FROM THE PAST in the September issue was one of the best lead stories you have had for some time. More power to St. Reynard!

Better yet, TOFFEE has returned after over two years. The new companion magazine to *Madge*, IMAGINATIVE TALES has whetted my appetite for more—so give!

As to the other stories in the September *Madge*, THE BATTLE OF THE BELLS gave me the best laugh I have had in ages. IMMORTALITY, INC. was a good mood story. The others, while not bad, fell flat by comparison. All in all, a good issue.

Since the publication of my letter in the August issue I have gained several new pen-pals, received sample issues of fan magazines, and had some poetry of mine published in one of them, STAR-LANES. All this goes to show that the readers of IMAGINATION are a friendly group.

Dainis Bisenieks
336 S. Warren
Saginaw, Mich.

If you hurry to the newsstand you may still be able to obtain a copy

IMAGINATION

of the second issue of our new companion magazine, *IMAGINATIVE TALES*, containing TWO complete *TOFFEE* stories. Hilarious? They are side-splitting! Incidentally, the third issue, on sale November 9th, will contain a rollicking science-fantasy novel by top-notcher, Robert Bloch. Plus a terrific McCauley cover. Dash out for your copy. . . . wlh

A PINCH OF SALT

Dear Mr. Hamling:

In reference to Virginia Porter's letter and your reply, in the September issue: I am a native-born American, one who is extremely grateful and aware of her good fortune to be living in this country. Nevertheless, in contemplation of an American-dominated peace, let us, as you suggested, consider history. Once before there was an era of "world-wide" peace, under the forcible dominance of one very powerful nation. It lasted over two hundred years, becoming a mockery, which brought fear, enslavement, and ultimate decadence.

The *Pax Americana*, which Miss Porter advocates, might easily become as detrimental to the world as the *Pax Romana* was. Rome was the land of Cicero, of Catiline, of Seneca and of Nero; we have been a land of Wilson, and then a short time later of Capone; we are the land of the Four Freedoms, and on the other hand, McCarthy.

I realize that as a 17-year old I have not the wisdom nor the right to be dogmatic as to whether or not there should be a USA

space station only. Yet I do know that we, as Americans, must consider history, must consider our ideals and liabilities, before we can say, *we only are the right*.

To get back to Madge, she has been coming out of her recent slump. It appears that each stf magazine has its own rather vociferous following, which considers it to be the best, in the market. Hating to disagree, I do not consider Madge the best stf magazine published—but neither is it the worst. On my list Madge ranks number 5.

The *TOFFEE* novel in the first issue of your new magazine, *IMAGINATIVE TALES* was excellent, but then, *TOFFEE* always is!

In the September Madge, *VENGEANCE FROM THE PAST* was good, but frankly, not up to St. Reynard's past standards of excellence. Daniel F. Galouye continues to improve with every story he writes. He apparently has not only talent, but the stick-to-itiveness that will someday make him a great writer in the field. Of the entire issue, I would rate Jerry Bixby's *THE BATTLE OF THE BELLS* as number one.

Incidentally, while I was unfortunate enough to miss the June issue, I see where Gordon Pape made some disparaging remarks on it, just as Charles Broderick did in the September issue. Not every person is going to like every word you print, yet when a reader writes in giving his gripes, it is in the hope that you will, in conjunction with other opinions, be able to better the book. So please, ignore none of us. Rather, take a

pinch of salt with each!

Arline E. Gingold
303 N. Sunset Dr.
Ithaca, N.Y.

With our current world jockeying for "peace" between two great powers, we, as Americans can have only one choice. That's why we say it's to the interest of the world for a USA sponsored, space station. We don't want to enforce unilateral decisions on our neighbors — but is the same true for the Reds? . . . We do not ignore the letters from our readers, as you should know, Arline. Everybody has a solid voice in *Madge*. And our only hope is that more and more letters will come in every month to help us in our job. Salt? Delightful seasoning—we sprinkle a bit in each issue! with

SERIAL COMING UP!

Dear Mr. Hamling:

Congratulations! I have just finished plodding through the September issue of *Madge*, and must admit that out of the gloom one story comes to the fore. THE BATTLE OF THE BELLS is one of the most pleasing stories I've read in a long while, professional work, that is. When the authors learn to inject humor into their labors they will all improve.

If it weren't for an occasional outstanding story, *Fandora's Box*, and the letter column, I'm sure *Madge* might slip into the snobbery of mediocrity. But as it is, the book is well worth the cover price!

It continues to amaze me how Henry Bott labels Isaac Asimov's

books as dull and insipid, in the book review department. If there is anyone who writes in a fast-paced style imbued with action it's Asimov. There must be some sensible open-minded reviewers around, willing to handle the job other than Bott!

Get rid of the short stories and use some serials. I'm sure that will be an improvement to *Madge*!

John Voorheis
540 Webster St.
Mishawaka, Ind.

Sorry you disagree with Hank Bott on Asimov. Hank has free reign in his department of *Madge*, expressing his views without our censoring them. He has a wide background in stf, as reader, editor, writer for some seventeen years. We feel he's a competent reviewer — second to none . . . Good news on the serial front! *Madge* will shortly run a four-parter by popular George O. Smith. This is really big news for *Madge* readers, as *HIGHWAYS IN HIDING* will prove to be one of the great science fiction novels in the past several decades with

CRADLE TALK?

Dear Bill:

Concerning profanity in stories, one of Max Brand's characters once upheld profanity on the grounds that it was used as emphasis: "I'd rather read a book with no punctuation than to hear a man talk without damning," he put it. Most every person uses profanity on occasion. As my visiting aunt put it: "The babies in the cradle don't say 'wah; wah—they say 'damn,

IMAGINATION

damn'!"

Wonder why most *Madge* fans say the last novel is always the best? Scattered in a circle around me are 31 issues of *Madge* and I'll now give you my opinion. Your greatest year was 1953, and the greatest stories were THE STAR-LORD (June '53) and NO SONS LEFT TO DIE! (September '53). The greatest covers were September and October.

Lee Huddleston
Box 352
Anton, Texas

Max Brand (Frederick Faust) was one of the really top writers of the past several decades. He was killed in action during the last World War when he served as a foreign correspondent. Faust was a stickler for realism in all his work, and an occasional cussword never bothered his millions of admirers. The punctuation analogy is a good one. We subscribe to it *wlh*

OUR BOY GEOFF!

Dear Bill:

Orchids to you again for your fine September issue. Even better than the average *Madge*, which is saying a mouthful. But then, Geoff St. Reynard is a mouthful!

In Geoff you have a writer with all the good points of Horatio Alger, John Steinbeck, and Ernest Hemingway, and few of the bad ones. Only fault I could find with VENGEANCE FROM THE PAST is that perhaps it was a bit too fantastic. For instance, the part where Ray beats Cuff and Skaggarach single-handed. Even Marcianno couldn't handle two of those

things! A bit far-fetched, but very gripping.

The cover was the best since you ran that awful "Fist of Shiva" thing in May '53. Frightening! Short stories ranged from great to lousy. BATTLE OF THE BELLS was cute, almost like John Collier's stuff. IMMORTALITY, INC. left me flat. My first disappointment with Galouye. WELCOME TO PARADISE didn't deserve to get into the magazine at all, but THREE SPACEMEN LEFT TO DIE! was a minor classic. Very effective ending.

Keep up the great cartoons, like the one on page 93 of the June issue, and page 77 of the August. Your cartoons are far superior to any of your competitors.

About the space station discussion that's being kicked around, why the heck doesn't somebody do something about it instead of yapping off their heads about who it should belong to? One of these days U.S. citizens will see a silver wheel circling the globe and it will have a hammer and sickle on it! Or doesn't our thickheaded government care if Russia rules the world?

Bill, if *Madge* continues using profanity in stories just for the ~~h~~—of it, you'll lose one reader! Let's keep our mag clean. Oh, sure, it's needed sometimes for realism and that, but *Madge* seems to overdo it. Have you no conscience?

Peter Kreeft
26. Richardson Ave.
Haledon, N. J.

Geoff (Bob Krepps) St. Reynard must be bursting with egoboo after the buildup you gave him, Pete!

But the lad deserves praise... You hit the nail on the proverbial head when you mention the possibility of a space station one of these fine days. Russia has already announced her interest in accomplishing space flight and the space station is the initial step. We'd like to see our government take some positive action—before it's too late. And it will be if the Reds beat us to the development of such an important technological triumph... Madge overdo cussing? We don't agree. The little lady's as mild mannered as any debutante. So there! wlh

NO MORE BEMS!

Dear Mr. Hamling:

I have been addicted to science fiction for some sixteen years and have seen the influx of new magazines in the field which are capitalizing on the sudden popularity and respectability stf has achieved.

I remained loyal to *Astounding* for years, possibly because at that time it was the only stf magazine that a small town teacher could carry home without having to request that it be wrapped. It is still one of my favorites although I became somewhat disenchanted at the time of L. Ron Hubbard's ill-advised adventure into pseudo-science, dianetics.

At odd times during the years, I have been moved to horror, laughter, apprehension, and almost to tears, all in the spirit of enjoyment and entertainment. Never until now, however, have I been moved to write a letter.

Why now? Because a good stf

magazine has reverted to a cheap sensational horror cover. Can you imagine my surprise and disgust when I picked up the September issue of *Madge* and saw on the cover an out-dated, old-fashioned BEM (I insist he be called that even though he was not supposed to be an extra-terrestrial) breaking puny little humans into small pieces?

Employing no little manual dexterity I contrived to keep the cover hidden with my wallet while I paid for my magazine; then, quickly clutching it to my breast (cover side in) I left hastily, hoping not to meet anyone I knew.

Arriving home by way of side streets I read the cover story and was further unnerved to discover the BEM purported to portray *homo neanderthalis*. How he has grown! A direct result, I realize, of the American high standard of living, balanced diet, vitamins, et al. To make matters worse the story fell considerably short of *Madge's* usually high standards.

IMAGINATION is a good magazine and one of the six I buy steadily. But please, in the name of Caspar Milquetoasts all over the nation, don't make us turn crimson because the salesgirl in the drug-store raises one eyebrow and lifts a corner of her upper lip in a well-bred sneer as she glances at the cover. I know she probably reads *True Confessions*, but I'm sensitive!

Hetty Smith
129 Church St.
Romeo, Michigan

The September issue cover may have been a bit startling in theme,

but it wasn't the horror you suggest—at least from our point of view. However, as a nice innovation, how do you like the cover on this month's issue? Pretty charming, hey? We'll bet you won't want to hide this issue—bet you'll display it quite proudly. We'd really like to get the reaction of all you readers to this type of cover, which is something entirely new in the science fiction field. Poster, calendar art with an stf theme. Write us, please wlh

WHO'S GNASHING?

Dear Mr. Hamling:

I just finished reading the letter section of the September issue of *Madge*, and with your permission I would like to step outside for a few moments and be ill.

I'm not going to say, "Keep up the good work!" because you *may* have heard that before. Nor shall I say, "Bring back TOFFEE!" as you've done it in both *Madge* and the new companion magazine, IMAGINATIVE TALES.

To be frank, I don't care who cusses in your magazine. Nor shall I cuss to prove my point.

If I don't like a story, I won't finish reading it just because I've already paid for the thing. It's worth 35c not to read it.

If it costs a lot to put out IMAGINATION why not kick out FANDORA'S BOX? W. C. Brandt's Space Quiz idea would make a worthy substitute, if you insist on keeping those pages anyway.

Re your covers: the colors are festive, the artwork acceptable, but I'll be grateful for the day

when I can read IMAGINATION in public without being regarded as one of "those characters".

I used to enjoy INTRODUCING THE AUTHOR each issue, but toward the end they were becoming "too cute for words". Keep 'em pruned out.

Scheffy's cartoon BEM is, I presume, traditional now. They may be boring to some, but I find his work quite hilarious . . . compared to your other cartoons.

I despise your novels. I haven't missed a copy of IMAGINATION in the last two years, and I have been narrow-minded enough not to read even one of your novels. I prefer to finish a story at one sitting, so I am thoroughly in favor of more short stories.

Above all, clean up that letter section. Let's have more discussion and less back-patting. Let us arouse the weepers, wailers, and gnashers of teeth who buy your book and turn the letters into a monthly club meeting.

Mike Michel
115 Elm St.
Mauston, Wisc.

Take the lemon out of your mouth, Mike, you sound downright sour! That monthly club meeting you're asking for has all the earmarks of a brawl! wlh

SPACE STATION TREATY

Dear Mr Hamling:

I might as well get my two cents in about the space station controversy. It seems that one side thinks that if America built a space station she should turn it over to the UN and the other side thinks



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we should keep it because that would be giving Russia our best weapon.

Nobody appears to have hit upon the obvious. Why can't America make a treaty with the rest of the free world so that we would man it jointly with other free countries. In that way Russia would be left out and the free countries would not feel we were holding a sword over their heads!

In closing, I'd like to get in touch with teenage fans living near me.

Barry Hovey
10115 S. Grand Ave.
Los Angeles 3, Cal.

If we didn't have a "world union" already that might be the practical solution, Barry. But the UN would heave and holler over such a move. But on second thought, so what? At any rate, let's US get it first.

• • • • • wth

'MID ORCHIDS AND SEAWEED

Dear Bill:

At long last I get around to writing a letter to *Madge*. I'll start by evaluating the magazine with its main points of interest.

Stories: I like the short stories far better than the novels, which stink 60% of the time, are good 30% of the time, and *very* good 10%. The shorts are a different flock of pheasants altogether. They have better plots, are more idealaden, and are just plain better written.

Authors: *Madge's* are competent enough, but here's one space-happy guy who'd like to see some

BIG NAME writers now and then instead of the same group. Of the regulars I like Galouye and St. Reynard the best.

Editorial: is not as interesting as Palmer's used to be in *Other Worlds*, or as thought provoking as Campbell's or Gold's, but you present some interesting facts and have a nice style of writing.

Fandora's Box: I'm at a loss for intellectual words. Yahoo! What a gal! Man, this kid's the craziest, terrific, I mean real GONE, the most fractious, frantic, real ZORCH all the way! Okay, are you convinced? I like Mari Wolf!

Science Fiction Library: I sometimes disagree with Henry Bott in his criticism. Increase that to the hundredth power and you would have it correct. Of all the low, sneering, hard-hearted, cold-blooded, cussed, insenate critics I have ever run across, this man is it. Begone with the dog!

I have compared Bott with Groff Conklin, Boucher, and McComas, and invariably he gives a bad review to the many books liked by other reviewers. Sure, there's bound to be a few books to be pickled, but does he have to give more books bad reviews than any other critic in the business; and does he have to be cynical and sarcastic with books that may be dear to the hearts of others?

Letters: are very entertaining. Always like to find out what my fellow enthusiasts have to say.

IMAGINATION: it's entirety: It isn't *the* best, but one of the best. The former honor, I think, must be shared by *Astounding* and *Galaxy*, but, a long life to *Madge*!

Roger Bouvia
Maple Lane Trailer Park
608 South Road
Poughkeepsie, N. Y.

On this question of reviewers, what makes you think the ones you mention are more correct in their views? Book reviewing is all a matter of opinion. If Bott pans a book it's only because he sincerely believes it deserves panning. And Bott, we might point out, has a wide background in science fiction. Which is more than we can say for some others wth

ODE TO AN OUTHOUSE!

Dear Mr Hamling:

Just thought I'd let you know that I think *Madge's* September issue was pretty good. But don't you think THE BATTLE OF THE

BELLS would have been more aptly titled, "Ode To An Outhouse"?

I like everything in *Madge*, but I believe the letter section is extra special. It sure is nice to read other fans' ideas and complaints, etc.

What's all this fuss about giving the UN control of a space station? Did we give away control of the H bomb? Did we?

Congrats on your sister book, *IMAGINATIVE TALES*. And *TOFFEE* is a good way to start off the book!

R. Davies

346 Kentucky St.
Vallejo, Calif.

About all for this month, gang. See you next month, and don't forget to pick up *IMAGINATIVE TALES* if you haven't already. wth

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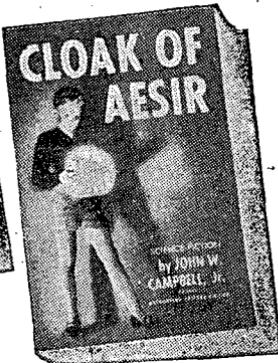
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